

# **Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada: Individual and Collective Remembering**

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## **Abstract**

When the Second World War came to an end, some 150 thousand Ukrainian Ostarbeiters (civilian labourers who were forcibly recruited to work for the Nazi economy during the war) refused to return from Germany to the Soviet-dominated Ukraine. Together with other Ukrainian Displaced Persons, they composed the third wave of Ukrainian immigration to Canada.

However, to this day, the history of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada as a separate subject has been overlooked by mainstream Ukrainian-Canadian historical research. There has been a tendency to generalize all DPs under the title “political refugees” without distinguishing Ostarbeiters as a separate category within this group.

This thesis addresses the historiographical gap mentioned above. It establishes background that is essential for readers’ understanding of the Ukrainian Ostarbeiters’ war time experiences. Built on oral history interviews with former forced labourers, it reconstructs the process of Ostarbeiters’ immigration to Canada and their integration into Canadian society. Through survey of scholarly texts, newspaper articles, and memoirs, it also explores the nature of the collective memory about Ostarbeiters in the Canadian context. Finally, based on the transcripts of 32 available interviews, the study investigates how former forced labourers make sense of their past and how they present their life experiences.

By describing the Ostarbeiters’ experience in Canada, revealing the nature of collective and individual remembering of the forced labour, and challenging certain existing conclusions about all Ukrainian DPs in the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography, this thesis sheds new light on the history of the “third wave” of Ukrainian immigration to Canada and the history of Ukrainian community in Canada. In addition, it contributes to the general history of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters by reconstructing the post-war experiences and analyzing collective and individual memories of those Ostarbeiters who did not return home after the war but decided to resettle to another country instead.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CURB – Central Ukrainian Relief Bureau

DPs – Displaced Persons

IRO – International Refugee Organization

SHAEF – Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force

UCC – Ukrainian Canadian Committee

UCRDC – Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre

UNRRA – United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

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My study would not have been possible without support offered by the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (Toronto). Especially, I would like to thank Andrij Makuch and Iroida Wynnycky, UCRDC Archivist. Their assistance in my research by providing access to UCRDC oral history archive and finding new informants yielded significant results.

I am indebted to all of my informants from Toronto and Saskatoon for the consent to share their life stories with me. Indeed, it would have been impossible for me to write my paper without their willingness to be interviewed.

I warmly thank my Ukrainian friends, the Pilkiw family from Toronto. Their generosity in sheltering me in their home, while I was conducting my oral history field work in Toronto, was truly amazing. They helped me with researching the Ukrainian community in Toronto and finding Ostarbeiters for interviews. Without their recommendations, it would have been very difficult to establish trustful relationship with potential informants.

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## INTRODUCTION

During the Second World War, several million foreign civilian workers were forcibly recruited for the agricultural, industrial, and domestic needs of the Third Reich. A significant portion constituted workers from Eastern Europe (mainly from Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia), who were called Ostarbeiters, which literary meant “workers from the East”. Ukrainians formed the largest part of forced workers, in general, and of Ostarbeiters, in particular. They were deported to Germany during 1941-1944 and employed in the agricultural sector and in industry, especially in war production. In contrast to other foreign workers, Ostarbeiters were to be treated as slaves and severely exploited because of Nazis ideological convictions against Eastern Europeans. However, in practise Ostarbeiters’ lives and working conditions varied from extremely severe to bearable.

When the war was over, most Ukrainian Ostarbeiters, willingly or unwillingly, were returned by Soviet authorities to the Soviet Ukraine. These Ukrainian Ostarbeiters who came back home were treated by the Soviet authorities as potential Western spies, propagandists of Western capitalistic way of life, and “traitors of Soviet Motherland” regardless of whether or not they had been subjected to exhausting labour and demeaning treatment in Nazi Germany. That preconception was accompanied by different restrictions laid on Ostarbeiters, such as a ban to settle in the capital of Ukraine, prohibition to pursue certain professions, no recognition for achievement in their jobs, rejection for admission to universities, and some other limitations.

In the meantime, some 150 thousand Ukrainian Ostarbieters refused to return to the Soviet-dominated Ukraine at the end of the war.<sup>1</sup> Together with a large number of war prisoners and political refugees, who fled from the Soviet Ukraine during the war, former forced labourers composed the group of the Ukrainian Displaced Persons (DPs) in post-war Europe and eventually migrated and settled in various Western counties.

Canada became a desirable destination for many Ukrainian DPs. By the end of the war, Canada had a substantial Ukrainian community that had been already developing for half of a century as a result of two earlier so-called immigrant waves. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, first Ukrainian immigrants - over 170,000 - arrived to Canada. As well, around 58,000 Ukrainians immigrated to Canada between the wars. Immigrants of the first and second “waves” settled primarily in the Prairie Provinces and were mainly agrarians from

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta: Soviet Refugees and America's Role in Their Repatriation* (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 174.

Western Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> Ukrainian DPs, who migrated to Canada after the war, formed the “third wave” of the Ukrainian immigration to this country. As Canadian historian Ihor Stebelsky estimates, their number constituted around 35 thousand.<sup>3</sup> Ukrainian Ostarbeiters comprised at least the half of all Ukrainian DP immigrants to Canada after the war.<sup>4</sup>

### **Remembering forced labour experience: writing Ostarbeiters’ history**

Ostarbeiters had been waiting for decades for their history to become a subject of comprehensive historical analysis and public discussion. Up until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet historians, while writing about the Nazi occupation of the USSR in 1941-1945, concealed information about forced labourers or referred to it very briefly and suppressed many aspects of the Ostarbeiters’ stories.<sup>5</sup> In Germany, the history of the forced labourers became a topic of historians’ interests and a subject for public discussion in the middle of the 1980s, when the issue of compensatory payments for the former forced labourers was raised.<sup>6</sup> The German government started to provide humanitarian aid (medical support, sanatorium treatment) to the former Nazis forced workers in the 1990s. Finally, in 2000, the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future”, a German Federal organization, was established for the purpose of making financial compensation. It also financed numerous research projects on the topic of forced labour. For example, in 2005-2006 the International Slave- and Forced Labourers Documentation Project was launched. It united researchers from 25 countries who conducted interviews and collected other documents in regard to Nazi forced labour.<sup>7</sup> As a result, this topic entered the public sphere, causing a wide social-political discussion in the whole of Europe.

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<sup>2</sup> Bohdan Kordan, and Lubomyr Luciuk, “Introduction,” in *A Delicate and Difficult Question: Documents in the History of Ukrainians in Canada, 1899-1962*, eds. Bohdan Kordan and Lubomyr Luciuk, (Kingston, Ont: Limestone Press, 1986), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ihor Stebelsky, “The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War”, in *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity*, eds. Lubomyr Luciuk and Stella Hryniuk (Toronto: Published in Association with the Ukrainian Canadian Centennial Committee by University of Toronto Press, 1991), 139, 142.

<sup>4</sup> I will discuss this assumption later in Chapter II.

<sup>5</sup> In the Soviet historical memory, Ostarbeiters were presented either as those who resisted the Nazis or as those who were defenseless victims of the occupants. Topics which contradicted the Soviet ideology – such as voluntary departure to Germany, benevolent treatment of the Soviet workers by the Germans, praise of the life in Europe, repatriation of the Soviet citizens, Ostarbeiters’ desires to stay in Europe after the war – were excluded from the official version of the events of the Soviet-German war.

<sup>6</sup> Helinada Hrinchenko, *Mizh Vyzvolenniam I Vyznanniam: Prymusova Pratsia V Natsytskii Nimechchyni V Politytsi Pamiati SRSR I FRN Chasiv “Kholodnoi Viiny”* (Kharkiv: NTMT, 2010), 165-180. For transliteration, I used the official rules approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on January 27, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> That is why we have to acknowledge that historians’ interest in this topic was provoked to certain extent by pragmatic reasons: by the possibility to get financial support from the German government.



In addition, the 1990s' "memory boom" in contemporary historical studies influenced the thematic and methodological approaches to the history of Nazi forced labourers. Historians began to address new insights from the fields of memory studies, commemoration techniques, political memory works, and individual and collective memories, trying to understand how the experience of the Second World War impacted the people's memories on both international and individual levels. A fascination with the individual, subjective perspective on the history of forced labour inspired the initiative to collect documents of individual origin, including oral history interviews with former Ostarbeiters.<sup>8</sup>

Aside from these two motives which explain the prevalence of study of the forced labourers' history in Europe, Ukrainian historians have been motivated to search Ostarbeiters' history for one more additional reason. In the 1990s and 2000s, Ukrainian historians endeavoured to revise the Soviet history, many attempting to write in a new pronationalist manner, and fill all the gaps which were previously ignored owing to early Soviet ideological constraints. Subsequently, many new topics arose in the field of historical writing, including the history of Ostarbeiters.

Altogether, the scholarly discourse reinforced by the German government's compensatory policy helped to create a new scholarly and social category of "Ostarbeiters." It was this large context which determined my interest in the history of Ostarbeiters.

Born in the last few years of Soviet Union's existence and raised in the post-Soviet Ukraine, I encountered the term "Ostarbeiters" for the first time when I was a high school student. In 2005, a big anniversary was celebrated, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, using the Soviet term for the Soviet-German War of 1941-1945. In commemoration of that event, the Ukrainian National Foundation "Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation" - organized under the supervision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and designed to process compensatory payments to former Ostarbeiters from the German government - arranged student research competition. I had not heard about Ostarbeiters and their war experience before. But, encouraged by my history teacher, whose father was an Ostarbeiter, I started exploring Ostarbeiters' history and interviewed my first informants.

During the course of my study at the National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" in Ukraine, I conducted 18 interviews with former Ostarbeiters and devoted my course papers and Bachelor's thesis to various components of Ostarbeiters' history. Mainly, I tried to reconstruct Ostarbeiters' repatriation experience and the treatment of the returning former

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<sup>8</sup> Hrinchenko, *Mizh Vyzvolenniam I Vyznanniam*, 9-10.

forced labourers by the authorities of the post-war Soviet Ukraine. I was also engaged in the research of the official Soviet memory about Ostarbeiters and the individual memories of those people.

Hence, when I received an opportunity to come to Canada and study at a Canadian university, I thought of it as a chance to extend my study of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters by looking into a different dimension of Ostarbeiters' post-war experiences.

Having witnessed a surge of publications on Ostarbeiters in Ukraine and the recurrence of this topic in the public sphere during the last 15 years, I was surprised to discover that any similar public discourse about Ostarbeiters in Canada was absent. The Ukrainian-Canadian historiography was silent in regard to this subject as well. Even at the individual level, when speaking to the members of the Ukrainian Canadian community, I found out that they barely knew about the Nazi forced workers and had not encountered the term "Ostarbeiters" at all. Such observations prompted me to search for appropriate explanations. Since the society and its culture determines individual memories and identities to a great extent, I was also intrigued to listen to Ostarbeiters' personal stories and investigate how their individual life experiences and identities would be presented within the described social context.

### **Research agenda**

Guided by those concerns, I proceeded to design this study. My thesis has a dual purpose. Firstly, I endeavour to reconstruct the post-war experiences of resettlement and integration into the new society of those Ukrainian Ostarbeiters who immigrated to Canada after the war. Secondly, I attempt to elucidate the nature of collective memory about Ostarbeiters in Canada as well as to analyze their individual memories and self-representations.

In order to achieve my goals, I concentrate on the following research questions which are presented respectively in the chapters of my Thesis. The **first chapter** addresses the questions who were Ukrainian Ostarbeiters and what was the specificity of their situation during and after the war. Here I briefly clarify the phenomenon of civilians', and particularly Ukrainians', forced labour during the war, explain the purposes of that labour, and describe the process of the Soviet post-war repatriation campaign. In such a way, this chapter establishes an essential background for the readers' understanding of the life experiences of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters. The **second chapter** asks the question how Ostarbeiters resettled to

Canada and integrated into new social circumstances. Here I reconstruct the process of Ostarbeiters' immigration to Canada and their adjustment to Canadian society. My special attention is devoted to Ostarbeiters' personal experiences in Canada, which are revealed on the basis of available interviews with former forced labourers. In the **third chapter**, on the basis of scholarly texts, newspaper articles, and memoirs, I explore if any sort of collective memory has been developed regarding distinct Ostarbeiters' experience in the Ukrainian-Canadian context. In the **concluding chapter** I explore how former forced labourers present their life experiences themselves. In this last chapter, Ostarbeiters' individual memories are the focus of my interest. On the basis of the transcripts of 32 available interviews, I investigate how these people make sense of their past, present their life experiences, and position themselves in their personal stories.

My study does not have a single chronological framework because different research questions address different periods. However, it generally ranges from 1941, when the deportation of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters was launched, to 2011, since my research embraces the contemporary self-presentations of the interviewees and analyses the collective memory about Ostarbeiters up until this year.

### **Terminological definitions: “Forced Worker”, “Ostarbeiter”**

It is relevant to comment on the question of terminology that is being used in this Thesis. The term “*foreign workers/labourers*” refers to all persons of foreign citizenship (non-Germans) employed on the territory of Germany or Germany-occupied countries to work for the needs of the Third Reich during the war. There were “*forced workers/labourers*” within the mentioned category whose working and living conditions differed from those of other workers. The following conditions held true for the *forced labourers*: they were forced to work despite their desire and were not able to end the employment relationship on their own; they were deprived of the right to influence their working and living conditions or even to complain about that; their probability of surviving was lower than that of German workers.<sup>9</sup> Since the category of *forced workers* embraced only civilians, concentration camp inmates were excluded from it.

The term “*Ostarbeiter*” (*Eastern worker*) was used during the war as a legal term for forced civilian workers from “areas that were formerly Soviet”, primarily for Ukrainian,

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, “Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany: Categories, Numbers, and Survivors,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 33 (2) (2002): 173. *JSTOR*.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3656586>

Belarusian, and Russian workers. It is worth mentioning that not all Ukrainian workers were identified as *Ostarbeiters*. The territory of Ukraine was divided by the Nazis into several separate administrative parts. Western Ukraine (the District of Galicia) was ceded to the General Government, a territorial entity in the occupied central Poland. Thus, Ukrainian workers from this region were considered to be Poles.<sup>10</sup> Being conscious of this distinction, in my paper I use the term *Ostarbeiters* to refer to all Ukrainians (as a synonym for *forced workers*), regardless of their pre-war residence. I do that to avoid overwhelming my readers with different terms. Moreover, such a distinction was not usually crucial for the post-war forced workers experience, the main focus of this paper.

It also should be noted that some Ukrainians went to Germany voluntarily. However, they were also classified as “Ostarbeiters” and treated as “forced workers” after their arrival to Germany.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, I have to acknowledge that the term “Ostarbeiter(s)” has not been used in the Canadian public discourse.<sup>12</sup> In addition, even though this term was officially used during the war and in the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, when the German government was making compensatory payments to the victims of the Nazi regime, former Ukrainian forced workers in Canada did not use that term themselves while speaking about their identity during the interviews. Rather, I use this term to unite into one group those people who experienced forced labour. Thus, I recognize that the term “Ostarbeiter(s)” is introduced by me as by the researcher and is not an inherent and original name for the former Ukrainian forced workers in Canada.

### Historiography

Although the history of Ukrainian Displaced Persons has already been addressed by Ukrainian-Canadian scholars, still many aspects of this topic remain untouched. To name one, there has been a tendency to generalize all DPs under the name “political refugees” without distinguishing *Ostarbeiters* as a separate category within this group. To this day, the

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<sup>10</sup> Tetiana Lapan, “Usni Istorii Galychan-Ostarbaiteriv: Specyfika Prymusovogo Dosvidu”, in *Skhid-Zakhid: Usna Istorii V Suchasnykh Sotsialno-Humanitarnykh Studiiakh: Teoriia I Praktyka Doslidzhen*, eds. Volodymyr Kravchenko and Helinada Hrinchenko (Kharkiv, 2008), 198-223.

<sup>11</sup> During the first months of the occupation of Ukraine, the Nazi propaganda described working conditions in Germany in the most positive terms in order to recruit Ukrainian workers. However, when the voluntary workers had arrived to Germany, they were treated as other forced workers – they could not influence their working and living conditions, were deprived of the basic social rights, were employed at the most dangerous work etc. – regardless of the fact that they come to Germany voluntarily.

<sup>12</sup> Unlike Canada, the term “Ostarbeiters” is firmly established in Ukraine. It is actively used by both former workers as a self label and by the analysts who study *Ostarbeiters’* history.

history of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada as a separate subject has been overlooked by mainstream Ukrainian-Canadian historical research.

At the same time, as I was able to ascertain, a few Ukrainian institutions in Canada have attempted to collect personal memories of the former Ostarbeiters. For example, in 1996, the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (at St. Vladimir's Institute in Toronto) announced a project which aimed to record interviews with former Ostarbeiters.<sup>13</sup> During 1998-2001, nearly 50 informants were located and interviewed. As far as I know, this so far has been the only project in Canada focusing specifically on Ostarbeiters. Several other institutions have collected interviews with post-war Ukrainian immigrants to Canada, Ostarbeiters being sporadically chosen among the interviewees. For example, some 20 to 30 interviews with post-war Ukrainian immigrants to Canada, which include several Ostarbeiters' oral histories, are held at the Bohdan Medwidsky Ukrainian Folklore Archives (University of Alberta).<sup>14</sup>

However, this limited and occasional interest in Ostarbeiters' memories had ceased on the stage of recording interviews without evolving to their analytical examination. Hence, my research of the Ostarbeiters' experiences in Canada and of their collective and individual memories appears to be the first study in this field.

### Sources

In the course of this study, different types of primary sources were examined. First of all, 32 oral history interviews with former Ostarbeiters became the basis for the research of individual memory and reconstruction of post-war experiences. For the purpose of analysing the collective memory about Ostarbeiters I have used such primary sources as the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography, Ostarbeiters' memoirs, and newspaper publications (*Toronto Daily Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, and Ukrainian-language newspapers *Ukrainian Voice* and *New Pathway*).

Along with primary sources, this study benefited from a range of secondary sources. Articles and monographs by Ukrainian, Russian, German, Italian, Canadian, and American scholars has helped to provide essential historical background in such areas as the general history of forced labour by the Nazis and the history of Displaced Persons, as well as the

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<sup>13</sup> InfoUkes, An Information Resource about Ukraine and Ukrainians, "Search For Ostarbeiters," <http://www.infoukes.com/history/ostarbeiter/>.

<sup>14</sup> The BMUFA is part of the Peter and Doris Kule Centre for Ukrainian and Canadian Folklore (Kule Folklore Centre) in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta.

processes of Soviet repatriation and Ukrainian DPs' resettlement to Canada. Particular authors also provided a good coverage of the methodological issues surrounding interview practice and analysis.

### **Research process in the field**

My research data for exploring Ostarbeiters' experiences and their individual memories was obtained by conducting oral history interviews. I decided to employ oral history techniques in my study since oral history as research methodology allows one to obtain both factual information about individual experiences and, importantly, subjective interpretations of these experiences. It is especially relevant in the context of the research on forced labour because information about Ostarbeiters' individual experiences cannot be found in any written sources. Oral history grants an opportunity to record Ostarbeiters' life stories, reconstruct their life experiences, and, most importantly, to comprehend individual estimations of forced workers' life experiences.

The aim of my field work was to collect personal narratives from former Ostarbeiters who came to Canada after the war. Initially, I tried to find informants in Saskatoon area where I have been residing. I tried to find the potential interviewees through my contacts in the Ukrainian Canadian community, in Ukrainian Orthodox church, Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and a seniors home in Saskatoon. But my search showed only two potential informants, which obviously was not enough for representative results. Since most Ostarbeiters settled in Ontario and Quebec after the war, Toronto was the next place to search. Conducting interviews in Toronto was advantageous for two main reasons. Firstly, there is a vibrant Ukrainian community which consists mainly of the former DPs. Secondly, the Toronto-based Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC) has already gathered some 50 interviews with former Ostarbeiters in Ontario. Some of those interviews were conducted by Iroida Wynnyckyj, archivist of the UCRDC, in 1997-2003, when the UCRDC announced a special project aimed at collecting Ostarbeiters' stories for its audio and video archives. The other part of the interviews were conducted by Ukrainian researcher Tetiana Lapan in 2001 for her dissertation on the Ukrainian Ostarbeiters' war experiences.<sup>15</sup> UCRDC personnel assisted me by providing access to their archives and finding new informants, which yielded significant results.

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<sup>15</sup> Iroida Wynnyckyj conducted interviews with the former Ostarbeiters in Ontario in order to record their pre-war and war-time experiences. Since many pre-war residents of the Western Ukraine migrated to Canada

In Toronto, I was lucky to have friends among the political refugees who considerably helped me in establishing contacts within Ukrainian community in Toronto and finding Ostarbeiters for interviews. Since many people are usually hesitant about opening up in front of strangers, it was easier to establish trustful relationships with potential informants through recommendations of common acquaintances. The biggest challenge in oral history field work was a sad fact: most Ostarbeiters, being born in the 1920s, have already died. It was common to hear from people that there would have been many informants 10 years earlier.

Generally, apart from 25 interviews borrowed from UCRDC, I was able to conduct six other interviews with Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Toronto and one in Saskatoon. It must be mentioned that I identified five more potential informants in Toronto but they refused to be interviewed for various reasons.<sup>16</sup> However, in most cases, former Ostarbeiters were very enthusiastic to be interviewed. For many of them it was a first chance to share their life experiences with an interested person. They were also encouraged by the argument that their interviews would help to write the history of Ukrainians in Canada.

The vast majority of interviews were conducted at the narrators' homes since it is usually a place that offers seclusion and comfort for the interviewee.<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of an interview, I introduced my research question, acquainted informants with the consent form where all their rights and conditions of using interviews were explained, and requested them to sign a form at the end of the interview.<sup>18</sup> Interviews ranged in length from one to two hours.

The questions I formulated for my interviews concerned such topics as the informant's childhood and pre-war years, onset of the war, deportation to Germany, forced

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after the war, the aim of Tetiana Lapan's study was to collect their life stories and to compare their war-time life experiences with those of Ostarbeiters who resided in Central and Eastern Ukraine before the war. So, the purpose of conducting interviews by Iroida Wynyckyj and Tetiana Lapan was quite different from the one I defined for my study. However, because their interviews were biographical interviews, I was able to use them in order to analyze informants' narratives and self-representations and reconstruct Ostarbeiters' experiences in Canada.

<sup>16</sup> Some of my potential informants alleged illness. Others did not explain their decision at all. Perhaps, for some of them certain aspects of their experiences were too upsetting or unsuitable for sharing, especially with a stranger. One informant said that her compensatory payments from the German government were reduced and, as a result, she did not want to talk about that experience anymore. Another woman, a daughter of Ostarbeiters who born at DP-camp, also refused to give an interview and advised me to read scholar literature since her memories might not coincide with memories of other people, and she could not remember many facts. My argument that I was not interested in facts but in personal impressions and estimations was useless. In general, whatever the reasons were, it became evident from my field work that some former Ostarbeiters were reluctant to share recollections about their own life experiences publicly.

<sup>17</sup> For specific ethic guidelines in oral history field work see: Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 55-64.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 3 for the Consent Form applied for conducting interviews for this research.

labour experience, end of the war, Soviet repatriation, residence in DP camps, migration to Canada, and, finally, life in Canada.<sup>19</sup> Types of questions, their sequence and themes generally overlapped with those employed by the researchers from the UCRDC for their interviews with Ostarbeiters. However, one difference should be noticed: while post-war life in Canada was not a specific point of interest for the UCRDC researchers, I tried to encourage my informants to recall that period of their lives in detail.

All interviews were conducted by me in Ukrainian, are audio-recorded and transcribed, as were the interviews from the UCRDC archive.<sup>20</sup>

Altogether, 32 interviews are in the study sample. Among those interviewed, 18 informants were pre-war residents of Western Ukraine, the territory under the Polish rule, and 14 were from other parts of Ukraine, which became part of the USSR in 1922.

In respect to informants' professional and educational backgrounds, most former Ostarbeiters did not have the opportunity to get higher or specialized education. In general, most completed only 3 to 7 grades of school before the war started, so they became "blue-collar" workers for the rest of their lives.

In regard to gender distribution, 8 interviews were recorded with men and 24 with women. Such a disproportion can be explained by the longer life span of women. Women comprise approximately three-fourths of those aged 85+.<sup>21</sup> Among the informants, one was born in 1916, 12 and 16 in the first and second half of the 1920s respectively, and 3 informants were born in the 1930s. Thus, most of the informants were in their late 80s, while those interviewed in 2001 by the researchers from UCRDC were mainly in their late 70s.

## Methodology

Oral history is the main methodological basis of my research. I used the method of *biographical-narrative interview* for conducting interviews with former Ostarbeiters. For the interview analysis, I employ elements of the *narrative analysis*, offered by American sociologist Catherine Riessman, and the method of *biographical case reconstruction*, developed by German sociologist Gabriele Rosenthal.<sup>22</sup> Narrative analysis takes the recalled

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<sup>19</sup> For the Questionnaire I employed in my oral history fieldwork see Appendix 4.

<sup>20</sup> Originally, the UCRDC interviews with the former Ostarbeiters were only audio-recorded. I transcribed them by myself and used transcripts for the analysis of the interviews.

<sup>21</sup> Clare Wenger, "Interviewing Older People," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, eds. Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002), 261.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine Riessman, "Analysis Of Personal Narratives," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, eds. Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002), 695-710.



story, or personal narrative, as an object of investigation. The method of *biographical case reconstruction* implies investigation of the difference between the narrated life story and experienced life history. I employ particularly these methods in my study since their analytic strategies help the researcher to analyze the way narrators present themselves through their stories and to determine the relevancy of a narrator's experience. It is exactly what I explore regarding Ostarbeiters' self-representations.

For the analysis of the collective memory about Ostarbeiters I draw mainly on the concept of "collective memory" as proposed by American anthropologist James Wertsch.<sup>23</sup> The basic premise here is the following: collective memory is an active process through which social groups construct their past and identity in order to justify certain current social needs and present themselves in public discourse. This process involves different kinds of cultural tools, among which narratives are the most important. Analyzing narrative resources, we can understand how the memory of a particular group is presented in the public sphere and what sort of collective memory and identity is fostered in its regard. I find this method particularly useful in my research, since it helps to explore what sort of collective memory about Ostarbieters have been created in Canada. In addition, this method allows us to define how Ukrainian Ostarbeiters have constructed their identity in order to position themselves in the Canadian context.

In my work, I also use content analysis for searching Canadian newspapers for narrative resources concerning Ostarbeiters' histories.

### **Ostarbeiters and immigrant studies**

For the researchers of Ukrainian immigration, Ostarbeiters constitute a unique group within Ukrainian immigrants in Canada in terms of their life experiences. While Ukrainians from the previous two "waves" of immigration were mainly economic immigrants who migrated to Canada in search of a better life, Ostarbeiters did not emigrate from Ukraine intentionally. Forcibly deported to Germany during the war, the vast majority of them initially intended to return home. However, after the war, in a relatively short span of time,

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Gabriele Rosental, "Biographical Research," in *Qualitative Research Practice*, eds. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber Gubrium, and David Silverman (London: SAGE, 2004), 48-64. Gabriele Rosental, "Reconstruction of Life Stories: Principles of Selection in Generating Stories for Narrative Biographical Interviews," in *The Narrative Study of Lives*, Vol. 1, eds. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (Newbury Park: Sage, 1993), 59-91.

<sup>23</sup> James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press), 2002.

they decided, oftentimes unexpectedly, to resettle to Canada instead. In contrast to previous Ukrainian immigrants who were mainly from Western Ukraine, Ostarbeiters were former residents not only of Western Ukrainian lands, but also of its Central and Eastern parts, which constituted the core of Soviet Ukraine.<sup>24</sup> They grew up in the USSR and had experienced the Soviet social and economic experiments. They survived the war. In other words, given their experiences under Soviet and the Nazi rule, Ostarbeiters brought different outlooks, values, and mentalities from those Ukrainians who had migrated to Canada earlier.

Similar to previous Ukrainian immigrants, Ostarbeiters also experienced certain initial problems in their adjustment to a new life in Canada and strived to reconstruct their Ukrainian identity in this new society. However, by the time former Ostarbeiters settled here (from the 1940s through early 1960s), Canada had change significantly. Ostarbeiters found themselves in rather different social and political context than the first two “waves” of Ukrainians had found themselves in Canada.

Moreover, Ostarbeiters also differed in their life experiences, educational background, and political convictions from other Ukrainians – namely political refugees – who were members of the same DP immigrant wave to Canada after the war.

Ukrainian Ostarbeiters can be studied not only as a unique group within Ukrainian immigrants in Canada, but also as a distinctive group within those of the former Nazi forced labourers. In comparison to other nationalities, namely Russians and Belarusians, Ukrainians constituted the largest part of all Ostarbeiters and of those nonreturners who avoided the Soviet repatriation and resettled abroad.<sup>25</sup> In addition, no other country coerced their citizens, former forced workers, to return home after the war, since most naturally aspired to return home. Only the USSR embarked on forced repatriation, because the Soviet citizens, and especially Ukrainians, preferred resettling to other countries instead of returning home. Thus, in my opinion, it would be safe to assume that Ukrainians were the largest group among all former forced workers of different nationalities, who resettled to countries not of their origin after the war. That is why Ukrainian Ostarbeiters are a unique group to study if one wants to analyse former forced workers’ post-war experiences.

While contributing to Ukrainian Canadian studies, my research also contributes to the growing field of immigrant heritage studies in Canada. This field continues to gain

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<sup>24</sup> Central and Eastern parts of Ukraine constituted the core of the Soviet Ukraine since the establishment of the USSR in 1922. Western part of Ukraine was annexed to the USSR in 1945.

<sup>25</sup> Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta*, 133.

momentum as represented by scholarship on German Canadians<sup>26</sup>, Muslim Canadians<sup>27</sup>, Chinese Canadians<sup>28</sup>, Portuguese Canadians<sup>29</sup>, and Japanese Canadians<sup>30</sup>. In the context of the growing studies of immigrant narratives within Canadian discourse on immigration and multiculturalism, my study demonstrates how social demand reshaped and reconstructed Ukrainian Ostarbeiters' memories and identities in Canada.

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<sup>26</sup> Angelika Sauer and Matthias Zimmer, *A Chorus of Different Voices: German-Canadian Identities* (New York: P. Lang, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Tabassum Ruby, *Immigrant Muslim Women and the Hijab: Sites of Struggle in Crafting and Negotiating Identities in Canada*. (Saskatoon, Sask: Community-University Institute for Social Research, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Wing Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945-80: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Rosa V. M. P Da and Teixeira José, *The Portuguese in Canada: From the Sea to the City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Kess, *Changing Japanese Identities in Multicultural Canada* (Victoria, B.C: University of Victoria, 2003).

# Chapter I

## Ukrainian Ostarbeiters: War Experiences

Who were Ukrainian Ostarbeiters? How did they find themselves in Germany? What did they do there? What was the specificity of their situation? What happened to them after the end of the war? Who were Displaced Persons? The purpose of the present chapter is to clarify those questions since this will establish an essential background for our understanding of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters' whole life experiences, their individual and collective memory.

### 1.1. *The use of forced labour by the Nazis*

The German war economy had become heavily dependent on the foreign workers by the late autumn of 1941.<sup>31</sup> Soldiers, demanded for the fronts, were to be replaced at their workplaces. The Nazi ideology was reluctant to accept the employment of German women in traditional men's jobs. Thus, to satisfy the increased manpower demands of the war economy, several million civilians from the occupied territories were lured or forcibly deported to Germany or Germany-occupied territory where they worked together with the prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates.

The use of foreign civilians as workers for the German economy was not planned in advance. It rather emerged from the necessity to satisfy the needs of the wartime economy that suffered from manpower shortage. It became especially crucial after the failure on the Eastern Front when more German workers were conscripted in order to compensate for the increasing military loss. In their turn, Eastern workers had to take place of German workers as more manpower was needed to sustain the German war economy.<sup>32</sup>

Three sectors of German economy were heavily dependent on forced labourers: agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. At the beginning of the war, most civilian foreign workers were employed in the agricultural sector. By the end of the war, this tendency had changed: the majority of workers were concentrated in industry and especially in war production.<sup>33</sup>

According to various Nazi decrees, foreign workers from different countries were to be treated differently. Conditions of their life and work varied noticeably. From diplomatic

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<sup>31</sup> Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany Under the Third Reich*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>32</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 151.

<sup>33</sup> Shneider, Beyer. "Forced labor under Third Reich." Part 1. *Nathan Associates Inc*.  
<http://www.nathaninc.com/resources/forced-labor-under-third-reich>.

and racial considerations, citizens of Western and Nazi-friendly countries were to be treated like Germans. Thus, civilian workers from Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Italy were considered to be “quite similar to German workers” and were granted, although with increasing reluctance, certain social benefits, such as the social insurance system, safety regulations, and hygiene in the workplace.<sup>34</sup> Normally, these workers signed contracts that specified qualifications, types and hours of work, accommodations, wages, and bonus scales. However, they were often forced by various methods to continue their work after the term prescribed initially in their contracts.<sup>35</sup>

Workers from Poland and the Soviet Union did not have the civil rights which Western and certain Central European workers had. Moreover, they were to be treated as serfs and exploited severely.<sup>36</sup> To a certain degree, their severe treatment and discrimination smoothed over contradictions between economic needs in employment of the foreign workers from the East and ideological convictions against that.<sup>37</sup>

As German historians Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker estimate, a mortality rate of Poles and Eastern workers was at least six times higher than that for the German population of the same age.<sup>38</sup> They also were obligated to wear the distinguishing emblems – “P” and “OST” – marking them as Polish and Soviet citizens respectively.<sup>39</sup> It was forbidden or severely restricted for them to use public transport and visit public places such as cinemas, churches, or restaurants. They also faced restriction in social contacts. Usually, Poles and Eastern workers were employed in the most dangerous jobs, worked longer hours in worse conditions, and received reduced food rations and deficient medical care. Their wages were significantly less than those of other foreigners. Housing and medical conditions were also inadequate.

However, not all treatment of Eastern foreign workers was severe and harsh. Often, it depended not only on the official decrees, but also on employers and overseers. Workers in rural areas often faced better treatment than those in industry and lived in more or less decent conditions. Circumstances of life and work of forced labourers differed even within the companies in the same industry. Many former Ostarbeiters mention that they received sympathy and different kinds of help from Germans. In other words, existing regulations

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<sup>34</sup> Spoerer and Fleischhacker, *Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany*, 173.

<sup>35</sup> John Fried, *The Exploitation of Foreign Labour by Germany* (Montreal: International Labor Office, 1945), 87.

<sup>36</sup> Spoerer and Fleischhacker, *Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany*, 173.

<sup>37</sup> Fried, *The Exploitation of Foreign Labour by Germany*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Spoerer and Fleischhacker, *Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany*, 203.

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix 1.

about severe treatment of Poles and Soviet citizens were not always necessarily implemented in practice.

For various reasons, it has been difficult to estimate the total number of forced labourers under the Third Reich during the war.<sup>40</sup> German historian Ulrich Herbert in his pioneering study of the history of forced labour in Nazi Germany (published in 1985) argues that about 7,615,970 foreign workers were officially employed on the territory of the Third Reich in August 1944. They included 2,126,753 million civilian workers from the USSR, the largest group in comparison to other nationalities.<sup>41</sup>

Historians Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhackerin argue that 13.5 million foreign labourers were engaged in the German war economy from 1939 to 1945. This number included between 1.1 and 1.5 million volunteers. So, by their estimates, at least 12 million foreigners were *forced labourers*, among which 2,775,000 million were civilian USSR citizens.<sup>42</sup>

### ***1.2. Deportation of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters to Germany: dates and numbers***

Most Ukrainian Ostarbeiters were young, unskilled workers. Their deportation to Germany began in the summer of 1941, the first months of the German occupation of Ukraine. Ukrainian workers had diverse war experiences. Initially, many of them, especially from Western Ukraine, were convinced by the Nazi propaganda and volunteered to work in Germany in order to earn some money and improve their living conditions. However, very soon the stream of volunteers exhausted as it became known that the treatment of workers in Germany was not as pleasant as the Nazi propaganda described. At the same time, more and more workers were needed in Germany. Thus, in Ukraine, the massed forced deportation of the workers to Germany was introduced in the beginning of 1942, while in Western Ukraine it was started in the middle of 1943.<sup>43</sup> Forced deportation lasted till summer 1944. By the estimation of Ukrainian historian Tetiana Lapan, about 50% of the workers from the Western

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<sup>40</sup> The number of workers and their activities changed from month to month. Workers could change their status if they experienced internment in concentration camps or internment camps. Wartime conditions complicated the preservation of many relevant sources.

<sup>41</sup> Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 298. According to Ulrich Herbert, besides 2.8 million of Soviet citizens, there were 250,000 Belgians, 1.3 million French, 590,000 Italians, and 1.7 million Poles working in the German economy.

<sup>42</sup> Spoerer and Fleischhacker, *Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany*, 187, 197.

<sup>43</sup> Tetiana Lapan, “*Verbuvania I Deportatsiia Naseleennia Ukrainy Do Nimechchyny Ta Umovy Yogo Pratsi I Roboty U Nevoli*”, (Dysertatsiia Na Zdobuttia Naukovogo Stupenia Kandydata Istorychnykh Nauk, Lviv, 2005), 99.

Ukraine consented to go to Germany, while only 4-16% of the “Soviet” Ukrainians agreed to that.<sup>44</sup>

Foreign researchers studying the phenomenon of forced labour usually do not differentiate between the Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians within the category “Soviet citizens”. This task is laid before the researchers from the post-Soviet countries. It is interesting that their estimated numbers of Ostarbeiters are considerably higher from those offered by German authors. It was stated in the indictment of the Nuremberg Trial that 4,978,000 million of the Soviet civilians were deported to the Third Reich as Ostarbeiters. This number was established by the Administration of the Plenipotentiary of USSR for Repatriation Affairs.<sup>45</sup> It was further repeated in different Soviet publications concerning this subject. Russian historian Pavel Polyan, the author of the first well-researched monograph about the use of Soviet forced workers’ labour, estimates the number of Soviet Ostarbeiters to have been 4,128,796 million, which includes 2,032,112 million of Ukrainians.<sup>46</sup> The number of 2.4 million of particularly Ukrainian Ostarbeiters (including 350,000 workers from the Western Ukraine) has been established in the Ukrainian historiography.<sup>47</sup>

### ***1.3. Ukrainian forced workers among Displaced Persons***

When the Second World War was over, the former territory of the Third Reich teemed with millions of foreigners. According to the legal classification developed by the SHAEF, displaced persons included “evacuees, war or political refugees, political prisoners, forced or voluntary workers, Todt workers and former members of forces under German command, deportees, intruded persons, extruded persons, civilian internees, ex-prisoners of war, and stateless persons.”<sup>48</sup> To be more precise, Displaced Persons were civilians outside the boundaries of their native countries by the reason of the war who were unable to return home without assistance.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Lapan, *Verbuvania I Deportatsiia Naselennia Ukrainy Do Nimechchyny Ta Umovy Yogo Pratsi I Roboty U Nevoli*, 99.

<sup>45</sup> Vyktor Zemskov, “K Voprosu O Repatriatsii Sovetskikh Grazhdan,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 4 (1990): 26.

<sup>46</sup> Pavel Polyan, *Zherty Dvukh Diktatur: Zhizn, Trud, Unizheniya I Smert Sovetskikh Voennoplennykh I Ostarbaiteirov Na Chuzhbine* (Moskva: Rossiiskaia Politicheskaiia Entsiklopediia, 2002), 11.

<sup>47</sup> *Bezsmertia. Knyha Pamiati Ukrainy 1941–1945* (Kyiv, 2000), 944.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Wyman, *DP: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989), 25. SHAEF – Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, the headquarters of the Commander of Allied forces in the North-Western Europe, from late 1943 until the end of the Second World War.

<sup>49</sup> Marta Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees* (New York, Oxford, 2000), 36.

It is generally estimated that there were near 11 million refugees by the end of the Second World War in Western Europe.<sup>50</sup> According to the Soviet Administration for Repatriation Affairs, there were 5 million of Soviet citizens who were displaced.<sup>51</sup> About 3 million were in occupation zones of Western allies, and less than 2 million – in the zone of Soviet occupation.<sup>52</sup> No accurate statistics on Ukrainians are available because the Western authorities did not recognize them as a separate group. Marta Dyczok, on the basis of surviving records and oral accounts of survivors, estimates the number of Ukrainian DPs as 3 million at the end of the war.<sup>53</sup>

Ostarbeiters constituted a significant part of those Ukrainians who were displaced, for the variety of reasons, during the war. There were also refugees who fled the Soviet Union during the war (mainly intelligentsia who had suffered repression by the Soviet government), Ukrainian Red Army soldiers who survived prisoner-of-war camps, members of Ukrainian cooperative military units with the German army, members of Ukrainian Nationalist Movement who had failed to create an independent Ukraine during the war and hoped to continue their struggle abroad.

#### **1.4. Soviet repatriation campaign**

With the war's end, the Soviet officials had to manage the situation with a huge number of displaced Soviet citizens. This issue turned out to be quite contradictory. In general, the communist authorities were suspicious of all Soviet citizens who spent some time beyond the Soviet ideological system.<sup>54</sup> Ostarbeiters were just in that situation. They saw the “capitalistic way of life”, met many different people from various countries, and could have been subjected to the influence of “wrong” ideologies. The Soviet officials feared that after returning home Ostarbeiters would disseminate hostile ideologies and would become “propagandists of the Western capitalistic way of life”.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Displaced Persons, according to the definition of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) were civilians outside the national boundaries by reason of the war, who were 1) desirous but unable to return home, or find homes without assistance 2) to be return to enemy or ex-enemy territory. (Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 36)

<sup>52</sup> Viktor Zemskov, “Repatriatsiia Peremeshhennykh Sovetskikh Grazhdan,” in *Voina I Obshchestvo, 1941-1945: V 2-kh knigakh*, ed. G.N. Sevastjanova, vol. 2, (Moskva, 2004), 332.

<sup>53</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 44.

<sup>54</sup> Elena Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe Sovetskoe Obshchestvo: Politika I Povsednevnost 1945-1953* (Moskva, 1999), 18.

<sup>55</sup> Zemskov, *Repatriatsiia Peremeshhennykh Sovetskikh Grazhdan*, 334.



In addition, those Soviet citizens who had worked for the Nazis did not fit in the Soviet ideological myth about the Great Patriotic War, as the Soviet-German war was officially called in the USSR. “Soviet patriotism”, “mass heroism” in the resistance to the Nazis, and “national war against the enemy” were among the most significant components of that myth.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the fact that millions of the Soviet citizens worked for the Soviet enemy during the war, even if they were forced to work, was quite “inconvenient” in that public discourse about the Great Patriotic War and the unwavering patriotic response to the Nazis from all Soviet people.

Thus, on the one hand, Soviet authorities had ideological preconceptions against Ostarbeiters. But, on the other hand, it was crucial for the Soviet government to return all Soviet displaced citizens. The policy of forced repatriation, determined by psychological, propagandistic, and strategic considerations, was implemented.

The Soviet Union lost a huge number of its citizens during the war: its fatalities ran to 20 million, in comparison, for example, to 300,000 for the United States and 330,000 for Britain.<sup>57</sup> Besides that, 60 percent of transportation facilities and 70 percent of industrial capacity in the occupied territory had been destroyed.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the human losses were to be compensated and manpower was needed in order to rebuild the destroyed economy. Soviet citizens who were abroad, particularly on the territory of the former Third Reich, were a significant source of that manpower and were required to be returned. Besides that, Mark Elliot indicates that not only military collaborators but also POWs and forced labourers were regarded as traitors to the Soviet country. Thus, the desire to “punish the guilty” contributed to forced repatriation.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, the Soviet government feared that displaced Soviet citizens would become an anti-Soviet post-war emigration that would undermine the portrait of the world’s first Marxist state with citizens loyal to socialistic ideals and the USSR’s nations in solid unity.<sup>60</sup> In other words, each refugee represented a failure of the Communist system. Consequently, all Soviet citizens were to be returned in order to avoid the possible negative results of their resettlement to the Western countries.

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<sup>56</sup> Vladyslav Hrynevych, “Radianska Mifotvorchist Dovkola Velykoi Vitchyznianoi Viiny V Ukraini”, *Storinky Voiennoi Istorii Ukrainy: Zbirnyk Naukovukh Statei* 10 (1) (2006): 22.

<sup>57</sup> Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta*, 133.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 135.

In the light of all those reasons, the repatriation of the Soviet citizens became an important task for the Soviet government long before the end of the war. The system of repatriation camps was established by the Soviet authorities in order to secure the return of all Soviet citizens, regardless of their desires, to their motherland. The Soviet Administration for Repatriation Affairs was formed in October, 1944. The repatriation teams were created and sent to twenty-three countries.<sup>61</sup> Before the establishment of the official agreements on repatriation, the repatriation teams operated mainly in the Soviet zone. In February 1945, the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States agreed on the repatriation of each others' citizens in a secret clause of the Yalta agreement. For the Soviet Union it meant that force could be used in returning the Soviet displaced nationals.

Being aware that a significant number of the Soviet DPs were reluctant or uncertain about returning home, the Soviet Repatriation Administration launched a propaganda campaign in November 1944, aimed at convincing Soviet citizens that there were no reasons to fear repatriation.<sup>62</sup> Till March of 1946, around 1.1 million leaflets were printed for the Soviet POWs and forced labourers in Germany. About 105,000 special broadsheets were distributed.<sup>63</sup> The Soviet propaganda also declared a forgive-and-forget attitude: DPs would be forgiven for their past sins, such as being captured alive by the enemy, collaborating with Germans, and delaying the return home if they would "honestly fulfill their duties on their return".<sup>64</sup> Different material benefits were also promised: free transportation home, job security, loans, educational opportunities, the right to vote, and social services.<sup>65</sup>

### ***1.5. Attitudes of the Ukrainian Ostarbeiters towards returning home***

While the reasons for displacement were different, at the end of the war one can claim that the Ukrainians were divided into two groups: those who wanted to return home and those who tried to avoid that at any price.<sup>66</sup> While many Ukrainians from the group of Displaced Persons intentionally escaped from the Soviet Ukraine, they did not seek to return. Two Stalinist decrees that proclaimed the Soviet prisoners of war "traitors" and announced

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<sup>61</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 30.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Zemskov, *K Voprosu O Repatriatsii Sovetskikh Grazhdan*, 28. For some examples of Soviet propaganda broadsheets see Appendix 2.

<sup>64</sup> Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta*, 147.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>66</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 22.

penalties for their families were known to the DPs.<sup>67</sup> As there were no such special decrees for the Ostarbeiters, according to Marta Dyczok, Ukrainian Ostarbeiters were most predisposed among the Ukrainian DPs towards voluntarily repatriation.<sup>68</sup> However, many of them also decided not to come back home for different reasons.

Firstly, many workers encountered satisfactory treatment in Germany in comparison to how they were treated in the USSR. Many remembered forced collectivization, starvation, a government-induced famine of 1932-1933, and Stalin's purges in the late 1930s.<sup>69</sup> According to the Report of the repatriation poll among DPs in the assembly centres of the United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (May 1-14, 1946), many Soviet citizens tried to avoid repatriation for the following reasons: fear of forced labour conditions; "deportation to Siberia"; absence of political, cultural, religious and personal freedom at home; no private property. Some DPs stated that they had no fatherland to which to return since their country was occupied and they did not wish to become citizens of the USSR.<sup>70</sup>

Secondly, treatment former Ostarbeiters and other DPs received during the process of repatriation often influenced their decisions to not return home. Frequently, the Soviet soldiers and authorities from the repatriation teams behaved in an opposite way as the Soviet propaganda declared. Former Ostarbeiters mention in their interviews that they were threatened with promises of reprisals at home for their "luxury life in Germany" and "work for the enemy of their Motherland". The opposition to repatriation grew when it became known from the correspondence with relatives in Ukraine that those of the workers who decided to return home did not actually get there but were killed or deported to Siberia. Sometimes blackmail and kidnapping was used in order to force people to return home.<sup>71</sup> As Pavel Polyan mentions, Soviet repatriation, especially at the beginning, did not differ from

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<sup>67</sup> Serhii Halchak, "Orhanizatsiini Zakhody Radyanskoyi Storony Z Pidhotovky Do Repatriatsii „Peremishchenykh Osib,”” *Storinky Voennoi Istorii Ukrainy: Zbirnyk Naukovykh Statei* 7 (2) (2003): 175.

<sup>68</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 114.

<sup>69</sup> See: Paul Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 529-571; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 380-424; Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>70</sup> "Why the Displaced Persons Refuse to Go Home, May 1946. Report of the Repatriation Poll of Displaced Persons in UNRRA Assembly Centers in Germany for the period 1-14 May 1946: Analysis of Negative Votes," in *Ukraine During World War II: History and Its Aftermath: a Symposium*, eds. Yuri Boshyk, Roman Waschuk, and Andriy Wynnyckyj (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), 214-218. UNRRA – the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, an international relief agency, created in November 1943 in order to provide aid to areas liberated from the Axis Powers and assist Displaced Persons.

<sup>71</sup> Ihor Stebelsky, "Ukrainian Population Migration after World War II," in *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II*, eds. Wsevolod Isajiw, Yuri Boshyk, and Roman Senkus (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 22.

the forced German mobilization of the forced workers: commissions, menaces, the same freight trains for transportation of people, humiliation, and even rapes of women.<sup>72</sup>

It is hard to evaluate the exact number of those Soviet citizens, and particularly Ukrainian Ostarbeiters, who feared returning home and tried to avoid it. According to Vyktor Zemskov, one of the first Russian historians of the Soviet repatriation, only 15% of Ostarbeiters from Western Ukraine decided to come back, 15% - not to come back, and around 70% - hesitated. Among forced workers from other parts of the Soviet territory, at least 70% agreed to come back, 5% - not to come back, and 25% - hesitated.<sup>73</sup> Being sceptical about this estimation, Pavel Polyan argues that in general 60-75% of all Soviet citizens agreed to voluntary repatriation.<sup>74</sup> Although no reliable estimates exist, there is much evidence that some Soviet DPs committed suicide in order to avoid repatriation to the USSR.<sup>75</sup>

Despite all desires and intentions, approximately 84% of all Soviet DPs returned, voluntary or involuntary, to the Soviet Union. In regard to the pre-war residents of the Western Ukraine, only 42% of them came back home after the war.<sup>76</sup>

### ***1.6. Displaced Persons: from repatriation to resettlement***

Displaced Persons who were residents of the pre-war Western Ukraine had an opportunity to avoid repatriation since there was a disagreement between Western and Soviet officials around the definition of Soviet citizenship.

In February 1944, the Yalta agreement subjected Soviet citizens to forced repatriation. During the war, Western Ukrainian territories that had been formerly under Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania became Soviet territories by passing to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The target of the Soviet policy was to return all DPs who had resided on "Soviet territory", even if they were Ukrainians from pre-war Ukrainian territory controlled by Poland. However, the Western Allies preferred to use citizenship rather than ethnic origin in the question of repatriation.<sup>77</sup> This issue was also bound with the recognition of the USSR's new borders after the war: the Grand Alliance were reluctant to recognize the new

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<sup>72</sup> Polyan, *Zherty Dvukh Diktatur*, 402.

<sup>73</sup> Zemskov, *K Voprosu O Repatriatsii Sovetskikh Grazhdan*, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Polyan, *Zherty Dvukh Diktatur*, 372.

<sup>75</sup> Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta*, 173. Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 50. Stebelsky, *Ukrainian Population Migration after World War II*, 21.

<sup>76</sup> Lapan, *Usni Istorii Galychan-Ostarbaiteriv*, 215-216.

<sup>77</sup> Ihor Stebelsky, "The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugee after the Second World War," in *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity*, eds. Lubomyr Luciuk and Stella Hryniuk (Toronto, 1991): 125.

Polish-Soviet border and the incorporation of the Baltic States, Western Belarus, Western Ukraine and Moldavia into the USSR.<sup>78</sup> Thus, many Ukrainians from pre-war Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania who desired to escape Soviet repatriation declared themselves as “Polish Ukrainians”, “Poles”, or other nationalities.

On November 9, 1943, the United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was created by the Allies in order to assist Displaced Persons who moved into areas of the Allied control. It was not authorized to deal with Soviet citizens in Germany.<sup>79</sup> But declaring themselves as “Polish Ukrainians” or “Poles”, Ukrainians could seek a shelter in DP camps under the UNRRA authority and migrate to other countries, escaping the Soviet repatriation. The UNRRA statistic proves the popularity of this method: the number of Ukrainians claiming Polish citizenship jumped from 9,190 in December 1945 to 106,549 in June 1947.<sup>80</sup>

Those who were in the territory of Soviet occupation were all subjected to forced repatriation. In the areas controlled by the Western armies, Ukrainians were counted as Soviet citizens and transferred to the Soviet zone by American and British authorities in the first months after the war.<sup>81</sup>

The busiest period of repatriation was summer of 1945 when most Soviet citizens were repatriated. By autumn 1945, just over 200,000 Ukrainian DPs had remained unrepatriated.<sup>82</sup>

The Soviet DPs, and especially Ukrainians, resisted Soviet forced repatriation even by means of committing suicides.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Ukrainians began to organize themselves into different communities, national organizations, and self-help committees, appealing to the Western authorities for protection against Soviet forced repatriation.<sup>84</sup> According to Pavel Polyan, successful self-organization of the Ukrainian DPs considerably restrained and even blocked the Soviet repatriation.<sup>85</sup>

Formally, the Soviet repatriation campaign lasted till March 1953 when the Soviet Administration for Repatriation Affairs was finally shut down. Forced repatriation was held

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<sup>78</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 100.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 34-36.

<sup>80</sup> Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta*, 172.

<sup>81</sup> Wyman, *DP: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, 65.

<sup>82</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 45.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>85</sup> Polyan, *Zherty Dvukh Diktatur*, 438.

over Ukrainians at least till 1947.<sup>86</sup> From that time, the Grand Alliance policy was changed from repatriation to resettlement.

When it comes to the estimation of the number of the Soviet citizens, and particularly Ukrainians, who avoided repatriation to the USSR, there is no consensus among the researchers. According to American researcher Mark Elliott, 529,000 Soviet DPs escaped repatriation, including 150,000 Ukrainians (28%).<sup>87</sup> Russian historians operate with the numbers that were established by the Soviet Administration for Repatriation Affairs: 451,561 Soviet citizens became nonreturners that includes 114,934 Ukrainians (32,1 %) on January 1, 1952.<sup>88</sup>

It is not the purpose of this study to estimate the exact number of the Ukrainian DPs who avoided Soviet repatriation. What is important for us here is the proportion of Ukrainians in comparison to other Soviet nationalities. Despite the discrepancy in all available statistics, the researchers are unanimous in their conclusions that Ukrainians formed the largest part of all nonreturners. Even though Ukrainians initially constituted the largest part of all Soviet citizens who were deported to the territory of the Third Reich during the war, the percentage of Ukrainians who avoided repatriation is still significantly disproportional, paying attention to the fact that they constituted only 16.5 percent of the Soviet population in 1939.<sup>89</sup> As Mark Elliot concludes, it was a result of Moscow's aggressive treatment of non-Russian nationalities.<sup>90</sup>

So, having managed to avoid the Soviet repatriation, Ukrainian Ostarbeiters migrated to other countries where their further life experiences turned out to be different from those who returned to the Soviet Union. The following chapters discuss the topic of former Ostarbeiters' resettlement to Canada and analyze their collective and individual memories.

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<sup>86</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 75.

<sup>87</sup> Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta*, 174.

<sup>88</sup> Zemskov, *K Voprosu O Repatriatsii Sovetskikh Grazhdan*, 39. Polyan, *Zhertvy Dvukh Diktatur*, 825. For more information about the treatment of the repatriated Soviet citizens in USSR see: Nikolai Tolstoy, *Victims of Yalta* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 395-410.

<sup>89</sup> Elliott, *Pawns of Yalta*, 166.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter II

### **Ostarbeiters in Canada: Reconstructing Immigrant Experiences**

Of an estimated 2 million Ukrainian Displaced Persons in the zones of Austria and Germany that were occupied by the Western Allies, 250,000 thousand avoided repatriation and resettled to the West.<sup>91</sup> The Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees and International Refugee Organization (IRO) facilitated DPs' immigration to potential host countries by concluding agreements with employers. The second half of 1949 was the peak migration period for IRO-assisted Ukrainians.<sup>92</sup> In general, during 1947-1951, the largest number – near 70 percent – of the Ukrainian DPs immigrated to North America (approximately 85-100,000 Ukrainians to U.S.A. and about 35,000 – to Canada) and to Australia (about 21,000).<sup>93</sup>

In this chapter I describe the process of the Ukrainian DPs' immigration from Europe to Canada. In particular, on the basis of former Ostarbeiters' interviews, I try to reconstruct specific conditions of resettlement to Canada and integration into new social circumstances for the Ukrainian forced workers. My goal here is to complete the picture of Ostarbeiters' post-war experience in order to proceed with examination of the collective and individual memories about forced labour in the Ukrainian-Canadian context.

#### **2.1. The Canadian Government and Ukrainian DPs**

Initially, Canada saw the problem of DPs as a temporary one that must be resolved by repatriation.<sup>94</sup> State officials' attention was committed to bringing home Canadian troops with their dependants and finding jobs for them. Originally, there was no discussion about possible admission of new immigrants. The Canadian government feared that post World War I economic decline, Depression and unemployment of the 1930s with accompanying social and political problems could recur. But contrary to such pessimistic expectations, the problem turned out to be not a shortage of jobs but a shortage of labourers since the Canadian economy began to prosper after the war.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Stebelsky, *Ukrainian Population Migration after World War II*, 21-22.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 30-33. More than one-fifth of the Ukrainian DPs immigrated to other European countries (mainly France, Belgium, and Britain). Finally, the smaller part resettled to Australasia and South America (first of all to Argentina and Brazil; also to Chile, Paraguay, and Venezuela).

<sup>94</sup> Harold Troper, "The Canadian Government and DPs, 1945-8," in *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II*, eds. Wsevolod Isajiw, Yury Boshyk, and Roman Senkus (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 403.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 404.

However, certain ethnic considerations prevented the admission of new immigrants. There were strict immigration restrictions implemented in Canada between two wars for Central and Eastern Europeans, including Ukrainians. They were regarded as “Undesirable Class Immigrants” on the basis of their lower ethnic/racial preference. Those restrictions, tightened during the Depression in the 1930s, were still in force at the end of Second World War. Thus, the Canadian government, being concerned about public opinion about accepting DPs and the ethnic suitability of would-be immigrants, initially hesitated to permit the immigration of Displaced Persons, especially from Eastern Europe.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, the importance of attracting new immigrants in order to satisfy the growing labour needs eventually surpassed previous considerations about future immigrants’ ethnic desirability. In order to embark on immigration, the reunification of first-degree relatives was permitted in late 1946. In 1948, a new Immigration Act was enacted and the immigration of Eastern Europeans was allowed.<sup>97</sup> Special quotas of DPs were assigned for particular labour projects. Primarily, the Canadian government sought workers for the lumber industry, mines, the garment industry, domestic labour, and farms.<sup>98</sup>

Harold Troper estimates the number of DPs who entered Canada as being 165,000. 26,000, or 17 percent, of them were Ukrainians.<sup>99</sup> Significantly greater numbers are suggested by Ihor Stebelsky: on the basis of unpublished government statistics, he argues that 34,329 Ukrainians immigrated to Canada in 1945-1955, and by 1961 their number had grown to 36,494.<sup>100</sup> In contrast to the previous waves of Ukrainian immigration to Canada – over 170,000 Ukrainian immigrants at the turn of the century and 58,000 Ukrainians between the wars who were mainly economic immigrants from Western Ukraine – the numbers of DPs were significantly smaller but included Ukrainians from all parts of Ukraine.<sup>101</sup>

## ***2.2. Ukrainian Canadian Community’s efforts***

In the 1940s, Canada had a substantial Ukrainian community that had been already developing for half of a century. Ukrainian Canadians proposed assistance for the Ukrainian DPs in their resettlement to Canada because they hoped that new immigrants would revive

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<sup>96</sup> Troper, *The Canadian Government and DPs, 1945-8*, 404-407.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>98</sup> Stebelsky, *The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War*, 122-175.

<sup>99</sup> Troper, *The Canadian Government and DPs, 1945-8*, 410.

<sup>100</sup> Stebelsky, *The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War*, 139, 142.

<sup>101</sup> Kordan and Luciuk, *Introduction*, 2.



and strengthen the existing Ukrainian Canadian community.<sup>102</sup> Ukrainian-Canadian families, using a program for family reunification, applied to have their relatives from DP camps admitted to Canada. Representatives of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee (UCC) in the Senate argued that Canada should accept the Ukrainian DPs because Ukraine was occupied by the communists who suppressed all individual liberties.<sup>103</sup> The Ukrainian Canadian Relief Fund and the Central Ukrainian Relief Bureau (CURB) were created under the protection of the UCC in order to assist DPs in Europe. CURB also lobbied British parliamentarians to protest against forced repatriation of the Ukrainian DPs to the USSR.<sup>104</sup>

Often, Canadian officials perceived the activity of Ukrainian-Canadian agencies that aided DPs with criticism. While they tolerated charitable and humanitarian relief work, the political activities of the mentioned organizations were seen as undesirable. It was feared that claiming Ukrainian independence and lobbying against repatriation might disrupt Canada's relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>105</sup>

The campaign against the DPs was promoted by the pro-Soviet Ukrainian Left in Canada. Pro-communist organizations argued that Canada should reject the immigration of the Ukrainian DPs since they all were war criminals and Nazi collaborators who tried to escape fair punishment in the Soviet Union.<sup>106</sup> This anti-DPs policy was promoted primarily by the Ukrainian Labour and Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA).<sup>107</sup> It argued in one of the issues of *Edmonton Journal* (February 12, 1945) that

the admission of these Nazi zealots [the Ukrainian DPs] would be nothing less than a national disaster. They could no more be expected to be loyal citizens of this country than they were of their own.<sup>108</sup>

Similar arguments in favour of rejecting the immigration of the Ukrainian DPs were also presented by the ULFTA representatives before the Senate committee on May 29, 1946.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> For more information see: Lubomyr Luciuk, *Searching for Place: Ukrainian Displaced Persons, Canada, and the Migration of Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 56-110.

<sup>103</sup> Myron Momryk, "Ukrainian DP Immigration and Governmental Policy in Canada, 1946-52," in *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II*, eds. Wsevolod Isajiw, Yury Boshyk, and Roman Senkus (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 410.

<sup>104</sup> Luciuk, *Searching for Place*, 75.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-84.

<sup>106</sup> Lubomyr Luciuk, "Unintended Consequences in Refugee Resettlement: Post-War Ukrainian Refugee Immigration to Canada," *International Migration Review* XX, no.2 (1986): 471.

<sup>107</sup> Later, ULFTA became known as the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians.

<sup>108</sup> Cited by Luciuk, *Unintended Consequences in Refugee Resettlement*, 471.

<sup>109</sup> Momryk, *Ukrainian DP Immigration and Governmental Policy in Canada, 1946-52*, 416.

In order to refute such suspicions, Ukrainian-Canadian organizations of the nationalist wing began to circulate descriptions of the Ukrainian DPs as the prospective immigrants in the most complimentary terms. Thousands of letters, reports, and pamphlets were distributed in Canada, the USA, and Western Europe for bureaucrats and immigration officials in order to persuade them that the Ukrainian DPs were western minded, industrious, religious, educated people, and by no means German collaborators.<sup>110</sup>

As Lubomyr Luciuk argues, those efforts did influence the federal government in favour of DPs' immigration. In addition, desire not to alienate Ukrainian Canadians voters, need in an influx of semi-skilled and unskilled labourers for industry, and an expectation that anti-communist Ukrainian immigrants would combat against the influence of the Left – all these reasons together disposed Canadian officials toward new Ukrainian immigration to Canada.<sup>111</sup>

### **2.3. *Ostarbeiters in Canada: the pattern of settlement and numbers***

The pattern of DPs settlement differed significantly from the pre-Second World War settlement of Ukrainians in Canada. Before the World War II, most Ukrainians were concentrated in the Prairie Provinces with a few small Ukrainian communities established in Ontario and British Columbia. That pattern changed after the war: over 47 percent of the Ukrainian DPs migrated to Ontario, over 20 percent – to Quebec, and generally 29.6 percent – to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.<sup>112</sup> The pattern of Ostarbeiters' settlement in Canada corresponded to the general tendency of DPs settlement. These high numbers of immigrants to Ontario and Quebec demonstrated the interdependence of the immigration policy and the rapidly industrialized Canadian economy as most employment opportunities for new immigrants were provided there.

For my study, the number of those Ukrainian Ostarbeiters who resettled to Canada is a significant factor in considering their ability as a group to develop a collective memory about their life experience. Unfortunately, there is no data available concerning Ostarbeiters

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<sup>110</sup> Luciuk, *Unintended Consequences in Refugee Resettlement*, 471. As an example, see: "No. 45: Memorandum from the Ukrainian Canadian Committee to the Rt. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, September 1946, Discussing the Resettlement of Displaced Persons," in *A Delicate and Difficult Question: Documents in the History of Ukrainians in Canada, 1899-1962*, eds. Bohdan Kordan and Lubomyr Luciuk (Kingston, Ont: Limestone Press, 1986), 146-148.

<sup>111</sup> Luciuk, *Searching for Place*, 190-191.

<sup>112</sup> Stebelsky, *The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War*, 141.

immigration to Canada. Thus, I can only provide indirect estimations of how many former forced labourers arrived to Canada.

As Matra Dyczok suggests, at the end of the war, 30-40 percent of the Ukrainian DPs in Europe were political refugees.<sup>113</sup> Orest Subtelny estimates that about 220,000 Ukrainians refused to return to the Soviet Ukraine and became the Ukrainian DPs. Within this group, political refugees constituted 30 to 40 percent, and 70-60% were presumed to be former forced workers.<sup>114</sup> Ihor Stebelsky, relying on the statistics from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, estimates that among 32,223 Ukrainian immigrants to Canada in 1946-52, 29.6 percent were farmers, 35.2 percent were workers, 1.8 percent were professionals, and 33.4 percent were classified as housewives and others.<sup>115</sup> During the war, most Ukrainians deported to Germany were poorly educated, young, unskilled workers and many of them were teenagers. As a result, they came to Canada without special professional education. Most likely, they were listed in the categories “farmers”, “workers”, and “housewives and others.” Therefore, taking all these estimates into consideration, it will be safe to suggest that former Ostarbeiters constituted, roughly speaking, at least the half of all Ukrainian DP immigrants to Canada.

#### ***2.4. Ostarbeiters' personal experiences in Canada***

It would be important to understand and reconstruct Ostarbeiters' resettlement experiences and adjustment to a new life in Canada on the basis of 32 interviews with former forced workers. Usually, an interview offers factual and subjective types of information. Later in this work, I will discuss and examine the informants' own perspectives and meanings in regard to their life experiences as Ostarbeiters. Now, relying on the factual information obtained during these interviews, I turn to discussion of actual experiences of resettlement and adjustment to life in Canada.

At the same time, despite my efforts to reconstruct facts from the interviews, it should be kept in mind that subjective dimension of oral sources does not allow a direct

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<sup>113</sup> Dyczok, *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees*, 77.

<sup>114</sup> Orest Subtelny, “Ukrainian Political Refugees: An Historical Overview,” in *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II*, eds. Wsevolod Isajiw, Yury Boshyk, and Roman Senkus (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 14.

<sup>115</sup> Stebelsky, *The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War*, 137. See also: Gerald Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), 138.

reconstruction of the past.<sup>116</sup> Also, narrators subjectivity select the facts they are willing to describe in their interviews. In words of Catherine Riessman, “narrators interpret the past in stories rather than reproduce the past as it was.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, I am aware of the somewhat limited capacity to reconstruct the Ostarbeiters’ experiences in Canada and do not intend to assume the objectivity of such an analysis. However, I would like to emphasize that my attempt is to reconstruct Ostarbeiters’ experiences as “*presented*” in the interviews, not “*as it was indeed*.” The way post-war experiences are presented, including a chosen set of related facts in the interviews, is a part of narrators’ identities and cannot be regarded as untruthful. At the same time, some factual data such as dates, marital and parental status, places of residence, and employment may serve as documentary sources. Therefore, by collecting many stories, a researcher can detect certain recurring patterns of shared collective experience presented in the interviews.

#### **2.4.1. *Reasons for not returning home***

Listening to Ostarbeiters’ interviews, it is interesting to hear former forced workers’ own explanations of their motives for not returning home. Several common themes can be identified in the available interviews.

Reestablishment of the communist rule in Ukraine was one of that factors which prevented many informants from returning home. The Soviet authorities had controlled the Central and Eastern Ukraine since 1922. So, Ostarbeiters from those areas spent their pre-war lives under the communist regime. Pre-war residents of the Western Ukraine encountered the Soviet officials in 1939-1941. However, both groups’ associations with the pre-war years were quite similar: poverty, forced collectivization, imprisonment and eviction of some family members. Together with unpredictable post-war situation at home (ruined cities and villages, uncertainty whether family members were still alive), coming back home did not promise a cheerful future. Anna Maryn, who was born in central Ukraine, explained her motivation:

I will tell you why I did not want [to come back home]. I reminded myself of my previous life, of my life in Germany, where I was not hungry with Germans, whereas at home I was always hungry and cold, and I worked hard. I thought: no, if I have to go home, I would better stay in Germany until I die. But I will not come back home. Because I have nothing to come back to. They sold us out [about forced collectivization].

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<sup>116</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 15.

<sup>117</sup> Riessman, *Analysis Of Personal Narratives*, 705.

And now, if we return home after the war – who knows what is waiting for us there?  
What if everything is destroyed there?!<sup>118</sup>

Olha Kotsur, born in Western Ukraine, clarified her reluctance to go home by referring to the situation in 1939:

She [friend] wrote me, she told me that she would go home. I told her: I will not go. I remembered how it was in 1939 when Russians came. I was young. They started sending our best villagers out to Siberia. They were sending the intelligentsia out to Siberia. Our village was not wealthy, but they would still send people out to Siberia.<sup>119</sup>

Some informants explained that their decision to avoid repatriation was motivated by the rumors: those who decided to come back home were not actually conveyed there but exiled to Siberia.<sup>120</sup>

In addition, many respondents mentioned that the policy of forced repatriation often changed their initial disposition toward returning home to the opposite one. In the repatriation camps, as they recalled, some people preferred suicide or self-injury to returning home.<sup>121</sup> Zina Semeniuk mentioned that she was very impressed by the fact that, in contrast to the Soviet authorities who persuaded their people to come back, other nationalities went home willingly by themselves, nobody invited them.<sup>122</sup> Petro Sydorenko remarked that he was indignant at the words “Your Motherland forgives you!” from the Soviet propaganda:

I thought: what do I have to be forgiven for?! What Motherland?! What have I done against the Motherland?! That Motherland let the Germans in, who took me away. And now I am guilty that the Motherland gave me away to the Germans?!

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<sup>118</sup> Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. For transliteration of the respondents' Ukrainian names (informants' of the UCRDC researchers), I used the official rules approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on January 27, 2010. I recognized that those people might use different spelling of their own names, but since I did not record those interviews but only worked audio records, I was not able to determine their preferences in spelling. For my own respondents, I used spelling they preferred personally, even though it differed from the official rules of transliteration. Since all interviews were conducted in Ukrainian, all extracts from the interviews that are presented in this paper were translated by me into English.

<sup>119</sup> Olha Kotsur, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive)

<sup>120</sup> For example, see: Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Mykola Drobiazko, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 30, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Raisa Machula, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 17, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Stephania Riopka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olena Ivasyshyn, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>121</sup> Petro Struk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Jaroslava Peszeniuk, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Sudbury, ON. July 6, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Emiliia Switalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Yelena Shaleva, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>122</sup> Zina Semeniuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 1, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

He also recalled two occasions he witnessed when Soviet soldiers blamed former Ostarbeiters in betrayal.<sup>123</sup> Halyna Yunyk described the following intimidation from a Soviet officer: “At home, you shall pay for your good life in Germany.”<sup>124</sup>

Nevertheless, the vast majority of Ostarbeiters, unlike my Canadian informants, returned home. From my experience of interviewing former forced workers who came back home to Ukraine, it follows that those people had the same repatriation experience and fears in their future as those who avoided returning home.<sup>125</sup> Thus, it incites to search for other reasons that determined the possibility of escaping repatriation. Among those, as it followed from the comparison between Canadian and Ukrainian interviews with former Ostarbeiters, were occasional encounters with different people. It was mentioned in Canadian interviews that friends and Soviet soldiers persuaded former workers (who initially volunteered to return home) not to believe in promising Soviet propaganda, threatened them with bad conditions at home and severe treatment of the former Ostarbeiters by the Soviet officials.<sup>126</sup>

One interesting observation can be extricated from the interviews with women, former Ostarbeiters. Some of them (eight women) indicated that they initially desired to return to Ukraine, but their husbands insisted on immigration to Canada. For example, Marta Liubynska mentioned:

My husband said, “We will not go to our country until the communists are there – we will not go home! I will go to Canada.” Immediately after we read in the newspaper “NovyiShliakh” that they were recruiting, we went to Paris, to that agents, and they accepted us. They asked us: why do you want to go to Canada, why do not you want to go home? And my husband replied instantly, “Till there are communists – I am not going home! I want to go some place where I will not hear about them! (...) He wanted to move to Canada very much, and we went to Canada.”<sup>127</sup>

From Halyna Dorosh reminiscences:

Did you intend to return home? – My husband did not let me go. He told me: Helen, do not go, let’s go into the world. He had a brother, oh, no, a cousin in Australia. Or Argentina, who corresponded with him and wanted to invite us. But later, when he found out that I was from the Greater Ukraine [A common name for the territory of Ukraine other than Western Ukraine, i.e. Central, Northern and Eastern Ukraine]he refused. And

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<sup>123</sup> Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>124</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011.

<sup>125</sup> Maria Melenchuk, “Repatriatciia Ukrainskykh Ostarbaiteriv u 1944-1951 rokakh,” (Course Paper, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 2007).

<sup>126</sup> Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Evheniia Senkus-Stashynska, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011. Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Maria Dziuba, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>127</sup> Marta Liubynska, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. March 10, 2003 (UCRDC Archive).

then we decided to go to Canada. We passed the commission. Everything was alright. [They arrived to Halifax and worked at a farm by contract].<sup>128</sup>

So, there was a good chance that were those women single, they would have likely come back to Ukraine. As the selection of my 32 informants shows, 20 of them were married to Ukrainians at the time of immigration to Canada.<sup>129</sup> By contrast, in my previous study of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Ukraine, all informants (male and female) who returned home were not married. Therefore, it can be presumed that married Ostarbeiters, having the support and encouragement of their partners, were more predisposed than single persons to dare to try a new way of life in new countries.

The desire to avoid Soviet repatriation had to be accompanied with the possibility to do that. As mentioned in the first chapter, the residents of the pre-war Ukrainian territories that were under the Polish jurisdiction before the war could claim Poland citizenship, resettle to DP camps, and, in such a way, escape returning home. Several informants, pre-war residents of Poland-ruled Ukrainian territories, mentioned that they profited from that by registering themselves as “Poles.”<sup>130</sup> However, some informants also recalled that people from Central and Eastern Ukraine, who could not claim Polish citizenship legally, falsified their documents and learned Polish in order to pose themselves as Poles.<sup>131</sup>

Altogether, at least five important factors were presented in the interviews concerning Ostarbeiters’ unwillingness to return home: negative attitudes toward the communist regime based on the pre-war experiences, uncertainty in the future, rumors about future destiny of the former Ostarbeiters, particular treatment in the repatriation camps in forms of threats and

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<sup>128</sup> Halyna Dorosh, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 22, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). See also: Olha Sukhovyj, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011. Emiliia Switalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olena Ivasyshyn, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Maria Kubrak, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>129</sup> 12 of them were married to former forced workers; others were married to Ukrainian prisoners of war (3) and members of Galicia Division (5).

<sup>130</sup> Dmytro Bodnar, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Ivan Korets, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 28, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Lesia (Alexandra) Kostiuk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 13, 2011. Stephania Riopka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>131</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011. Halyna Dorosh, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 22, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Yelena Shaleva, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnickyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive). Stephania Riopka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

violence, and other people's influences. The possibility of escaping repatriation was determined by the ability to pose oneself as "Pole".

#### **2.4.2. *Immigration to Canada: motivations, dates, and obstacles***

One of the points of my interest in former Ostarbeiters' interviews was to find an answer to such questions as: What did motivate forced laborers to immigrate to Canada? Did the knowledge about previous Ukrainian immigration experience to Canada and connection with previous immigrants influence the choice of resettlement to this country?

From the 32 interviewed, 14 Ostarbeiters indicated that they had fellow villagers or relatives in Canada who had immigrated many years ago. As, for example, Olha Kotsur mentioned: «I had neighbors there; they had been in Canada for a long time. We were in correspondence with them. They sent us some money, and not once.»<sup>132</sup>

Interestingly enough, from those 14 informants who had relatives in Canada, 12 persons were from Western Ukraine.<sup>133</sup> This territory, namely Halychyna and Bukovyna, was a source of the first two waves of Ukrainian immigration to Canada in 1891-1914 and 1923-1939. So, for Ostarbeiters from Western Ukraine immigration to Canada was facilitated by preliminary knowledge about this country and by the sponsorship of their fellow villagers and relatives. Usually, those people immigrated to Canada directly from Germany in 1947-1949.<sup>134</sup>

Apart from having relatives and acquaintances in Canada, five informants stated that they immigrated to Canada because their friends with whom they worked or stayed in the DP camps had resettled to Canada from Germany after the war. Those friends encouraged

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<sup>132</sup> Olha Kotsur, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>133</sup> From 31 interviewees, 17 Ostarbeiters were originally from Western Ukraine and 14 - from Central and Eastern Ukraine.

<sup>134</sup> For example, see: Ivan Vasylycia, interviewed by Iroida Wynnickyj. Sudbury, ON. August 6, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Mykola Drobiazko, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 30, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Petro Struk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olena Ivasyshyn, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olha Kotsur, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Lesia Kachka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 21, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Halyna Dorosh, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 22, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Maria Dziuba, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Yelena Shaleva, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Zina Semeniuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 1, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).



them to migrate to Canada, sometimes even finding jobs for them and sending some money for their trips.<sup>135</sup>

The majority of the informants immigrated to Canada in the 1950s. Initially, they went to other European countries, mainly to France, Great Britain, and Belgium, through work contracts, and only after that they migrated to Canada in search for better jobs and life conditions. An illustration of such an experience is Helen Yunuk's story:

We lived there till 1947. Then representatives of different countries began to come. They recruited people for work. They came from Venezuela and Argentina. My parents did not want to go across the ocean at that time. Representatives from Belgium also came and recruited people to work in the mines. So, my father agreed to go there. He was there alone for 3 months. And then he took in his whole family. We lived there very modestly. We bought almost nothing. Because my parents planned to leave Belgium. They did not want to stay there. Our acquaintances from German camps with whom we stayed together in the DP camps went to Canada while my father went to Belgium. They sent us an affidavit when my father had finished his 4-year-contract. And we were able to move to Canada.<sup>136</sup>

Those people, as it follows from their interviews, often lacked money to pay for their travel costs. As they indicated, international organization – UNRRA and IRO – subsidized their resettlement to one country. If later Displaced Persons desired to change their place of work and residence by immigration to another country, they had to pay for that by their own.<sup>137</sup> As Maria Kubrak recalled:

The French were not kind; there was no work. Andrii said: there is a Ukrainian one [agency] in Paris, they take to Canada. And he went to Paris alone, filled out the documents. UNRRA probably paid for our trip [to France]. For the trip to Canada we had to pay by ourselves. They did not want to pay the second time.<sup>138</sup>

12 informants already had little children that were born after the end of the war during the sojourn in DP camps. Some informants describe their marital and parental status as a challenge in getting permissions to migrate to Canada since the government was favouring single persons. In such situations, usually men went to Canada first. They had to fulfill their contract requirements and earned some money; only then their families were allowed to join them. As Emilia Switalska stated:

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<sup>135</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011. Olga Sukhovyy, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011. Dmytro Bodnar, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Kateryna Oliinyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>136</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011.

<sup>137</sup> See also: Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Emiliia Switalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anna Stetsyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>138</sup> Maria Kubrak, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

Once I was at home with our child. My husband came running and said, “There is a delegation from Canada, they are taking to Canada.” I asked him, “Where is better?” He replied, “In Canada. But they are taking only single persons. I will return for you after while.” They were recruiting to work in the mines. And he went there at the end of 1947. I stayed with our child. Then he sent me some money to cover my travel costs to Canada.<sup>139</sup>

Ivan Koret had a similar experience:

And later they started to register, asking who wants to go where. People who had relatives in America or Canada had the preference. Or the young people, who could work with their hands, or nurses, or dressmakers, those who knew something. Those were taken fastest. And the rest were taken to the forests in Canada. But because there were so many of us [parents and 5 children], we could not go. (...) They did not permit the whole family to go. The consul in Liverpool suggested, “It would be better if the elder boys go. If you do not like Canada, you will come back. If you do like Canada, you will settle yourselves and reunite with you family.” And so we did. We went, and everything was going well for us here. We bought a house in a year, then dragged over our father, mother, brothers, and our sister.<sup>140</sup>

Regarding a destination in Canada, the vast majority of the informants initially went to Quebec or Ontario. They migrated within those provinces in search of better jobs and living conditions and then finally settled down in Toronto (most of them), Sudbury, Kitchener, or Montreal. Five informants went to the Prairie Provinces – Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta – to join their relatives. For different reasons – hard working conditions, severe winters, or desire to join friend or relatives in Toronto – they decided to resettle to Ontario later.<sup>141</sup>

### **2.4.3. *Immigration and finding work***

The available interviews reveal the following ways of immigration to Canada. Many Ostarbeiters (12 informants) signed work contracts in the mining or forest industries, domestic services, or other industrial or agricultural sectors. 6 informants were provided with sponsorship from their family members who had immigrated to Canada 20-40 years earlier. As Mykola Maryn demonstrated:

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<sup>139</sup> Emiliia Switalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>140</sup> Ivan Korets, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 28, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). See also: Olena Ivasyshyn, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Maria Dziuba, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>141</sup> Lesia (Alexandra) Kostiuk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 13, 2011. Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Zina Semeniuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 1, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Yelena Shaleva, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

*Maria Melenchuk:* So, you decided to go to Canada because you had relatives there and they invited you? That is why you could come?

*Mykola Maryn:* They were also recruiting without that. But because we had a family, they were very happy to let us go and our family to receive us. If not, they would send people to work by contracts somewhere. To work in the forests, or somewhere else. In the mines. Those jobs were not very pleasant. Besides, you had to work one year there, and only then you could go wherever you wanted.<sup>142</sup>

Three respondents said that they received affidavits from their friends in Canada. A few other ways of immigration were also mentioned. For example, Ukrainians from the Ukrainian Committee in Brussels organized the resettlement for Olha Maksymiuk and her husband and paid their trip costs.<sup>143</sup> In the same way, the Union of Ukrainians in Great Britain facilitated the trip for Halyna Kudla and her husband.<sup>144</sup> Petro Sydorenko indicated that he got a “government loan” for his trip in the sum of 170 dollars and later returned that money to the Canadian government.<sup>145</sup>

The employment of Ostarbeiters in Canada was influenced by a few factors. The first one was the level of education. Being taken to Germany while they were 14-18 years old, Ostarbieters had completed only 3-7 grades of school before the war started. Then they spent 2-3 years working for the Nazi economy (1942-1945) and the following 2-11 years staying in camps for the DPs or working in other European counties. In such conditions, forced workers did not have opportunities to get higher and specialized education. Life circumstances forced them to find jobs as soon as possible in order to survive and provide for ones’ families. Even after immigration to Canada, they did not continue their education. They usually explained it by the lack of time and money: “There was no school, no welfare, nothing”<sup>146</sup>, “We had to find some job immediately and start to work. We are jealous a little bit now, because now immigrants can study. But we came to work”<sup>147</sup>, “I had only 9 months of my education. I did not have time to study”<sup>148</sup>, “I did not go to school because I had to pay for that.”<sup>149</sup>

Some women indicated that they did not have time to study because they had children they had to look after.<sup>150</sup> Only four informants pointed out that after arriving to Canada they

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<sup>142</sup> Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011

<sup>143</sup> Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>144</sup> Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive)

<sup>145</sup> Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>146</sup> Kateryna Oliinyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>147</sup> Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>148</sup> Halyna Dorosh, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 22, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>149</sup> Dmytro Bodnar, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>150</sup> Emiliia Svitalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

Anna Stetsyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

went to school for a few months to study English.<sup>151</sup> Strikingly different is Petro Sydorenko's story: he received education at the etching college in Toronto, opened his own art school, and got his job as painter at the Ontario government.<sup>152</sup> But, except for him, none of the informants got any specialized higher education. Subsequently, they worked all their lives as "blue-collar" workers, such as hotel room attendants, farmers, steel makers, miners, factory workers, tailors, sanitary technicians, builders, nurses, turners, domestics, mechanics, and laundresses.

#### **2.4.4. *First years in Canada: challenges and solutions***

It emerges from the interviews that the first two main things that former Ostarbeiters had to deal with in Canada right after their immigration was finding accommodation and work. Regarding the former, it turned out that small children were an obstacle in renting rooms. As Anelia Varvaruk described it:

Firstly, when we came, it was difficult with our child. We came to the city to rent an apartment. It was impossible. Because everyone told us: you have a child. They did not want to take us with a child. And I don't understand why, because they had four or five of their own children.<sup>153</sup>

For the vast majority of informants, first accommodation conditions were far from perfect. They had to share rooms and houses with other families and dealt with the lack of space.

Usually, first jobs for the former Ostarbeiters in Canada, either by contract or not, were physically hard or even in dangerous working conditions. For instance, Halia Yunyk and her mother, former Ostarbeiters, worked at the tuberculosis sanatorium:

Immediately my mother went to work at the laundry in the hospital for patients with tuberculosis. By the way, I also worked there when I was at school. For one summer. I have to say that the job was like hell. It was terribly hot there. There was steam everywhere. I worked there for one month. I would never work there again. My mother worked there, I guess, for one year.<sup>154</sup>

Yelena Shaleva had to work at the dry-cleaners:

It was very cold in Saskatchewan. And we got into it. We had to work for one year by contract as we were told. (...) And we worked at the dry-cleaners. O, I was so vulnerable. The rash broke out on me, oh, how the rash broke out on me! My hands

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<sup>151</sup> Olga Sukhovyj, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011. Olha Kotsur, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>152</sup> Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>153</sup> Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). See also: Emilia Svitalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Kateryna Oliinyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>154</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011.

rotted. I could not open my eyes. They were constantly closing, since there were chemical substances all around. And it was not good for me. (...) That cleaning was disgusting; it forced us to sleep and made us ill. (...) It was so hot, so hot, we were thirsty. But he [the owner] told us, "It costs 5 cents, you are not allowed to drink much." (...) Nothing helped me. We had to quit that job.<sup>155</sup>

Some informants could not find a job at all. It was very important since housing and nourishment depended on salaries, and some informants had to pay off their debts. Maria Kubrak recalled her first months in Canada very emotionally:

We rented a room. Hania [daughter] cried, she wanted to eat [*Maria Kubrak is crying*] (...) We bought some milk and bread on a credit. But we didn't have a cup to drink that milk from. (...) We found another room and went there. We had nothing. We put on our jackets, took our daughter, and went there. There was no jobs. My husband looked for a job and could find nothing. Then he found a job from 7 am to 7 pm, 20 dollars a week. And we had to pay for our room, we had to eat. And I started to look for a job too. I found. She was a Pole, and I had to wash clothes. She told she would give me 50 cents per hour. When I finished my work, she told that it was 4 pm and paid me. When I came out in the street, I realize that it was 6 pm already. She stole my 2 hours. (...) I cried more than once. But, thanks to God, we made our way up. And that kind of thing never happened again to us.<sup>156</sup>

As it emerges from some interviews, women did not have opportunity to work and increase families' funds because they had to stay at home with their children. For example, Halyna Kudla mentioned that they had three children and a day care was open only half a day. That prevented her from working full-time.<sup>157</sup>

So, in general, former Ostarbeiters tended to describe their first months and years in Canada as a hard experience connected with difficulties in housing and finding favorable jobs. However, nobody mentioned that those problems stemmed from their previous DP status.

Many informants mentioned that they received help from Ukrainians who had been established in Canada. It was already mentioned that friends and families facilitated Ostarbeiters' migration to Canada. Apart from that, Ostarbeiters indicated that they resided with their friends and relatives for the first several weeks and months. With their help, new immigrants also found first jobs. Friends and relatives also lent money to some informants for purchase of their first own apartments. For example, Maria Dziuba's uncle found her family a tenement and work. They resided in a house of one Ukrainian family who had immigrated to Canada earlier. Maria Dziuba recalled: "Those people were Ukrainians from our village.

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<sup>155</sup> Yelena Shaleva, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>156</sup> Maria Kubrak, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>157</sup> Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

They treated us nicely. They organized our wedding, hosted us at their place. So, we were very close with them.”<sup>158</sup>

While for most Ostarbeiters relationships with their compatriots were positive and their help was appreciative, there were a few exceptions that contradict these affirmative experiences. For example, Olha Maksymiuk recalled:

I found a job first, and then he [husband] did too. It was very hard for us with a child. Because, you know, people wouldn't accept you to their place if you had children. There was no place to accommodate the child, like there is childcare now. There wasn't back then. I had to leave my child for our landlord. She had her own 3 children. They treated my child so badly that I flooded with tears. I came home once and saw a bruise on her lip, another time under her eye. She [landlord] told me, “She fell down over the threshold.” She had two girls and one boy. I was sure that it was that boy's job. By the way, they were Ukrainians, Baptists. I thought: how in the world can people do things like that?! We didn't live there for a long time, we moved to another place again.<sup>159</sup>

Unfriendly communication with her relatives left its mark on Zina Semeniuk's memory:

I got into Winnipeg. Because the family of my grandfather was there. My father's family was there, they arrived after the Great War, before the Second World War. They received us quite coldly. Because they were “left”, they were communists. They belonged to the TUK, a communist organization. They were not nice. When I came to their house, there was Lenin and Stalin. And for Christmas they turned on the song “The Red Army is coming.” It made my flesh creep. I thought that if I had already survived that, and I must survive it again. They believed in communism strongly. And they were ordinary Galicians who left after the Great War and who barely could read and write. They were hardworking people. And they became millionaires. They went to visit Ukraine. We told them about the situation in Ukraine. They replied that we were fascists.<sup>160</sup>

In order to fully comprehend the Ostarbeiters' experiences in Canada, it is helpful to follow their first impressions from this country. Partly, they have been already described: Ostarbeiters' first years of life in Canada were associated with difficulties in finding lucrative and secure jobs, convenient residences (especially with children), supplying means for assistance, paying off debts. A few more interesting individual impressions can be selected out of the available interviews.

Anna Maryn had to work out her contract on a farm in Alliston (Ontario):

When I went to work by contract, when I saw it all – it was a wild country! I did not like it at all. There was a farm, and nobody around. Only some truck would bring you bread or milk, and that was all you would see during the whole year. And you did not see anyone else. And that small village was five or six miles farther away from you. I thought I was living in the wild.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Maria Dziuba, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>159</sup> Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>160</sup> Zina Semeniuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 1, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>161</sup> Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

Kateryna Oliinyk and her husband were frightened by the landscape they saw:

We were going through Halifax. We saw mountains, rocks, tortoises crawling on the rocks. My husband clutched his head and said, "Oh God, where did I come to?! A land of woods and rocks!" You know, we were scared.<sup>162</sup>

Olga Sukhovii recalled problems with mastering English. In addition, her husband got ill and she had to work very hard in order to pay for his medication at hospital.

I did not like Canada. Even at the airport, when they took our passports away, I thought they would send us back. (...) When we came here [to Canada], it was very difficult. Neither I nor him knew English. (...) My husband was ill. I had a very ill husband. He went to the hospital, and I went to work. Somebody had to work and earn money. So, I worked, and he was in the hospital for four and half years. We had to pay for the hospital. I quit my job and got another one. I was earning more money there, and it was easier. (...) At the beginning he [husband] was unsure too. He told me: perhaps, it would have been better if [we had not come to Canada]. But then he got used and would never leave Canada! At the beginning, I was paying for his doctor and for the hospital. But later they came up with that (?): you did not have to pay when you went to visit your doctor. It was only at the beginning, when my husband was in the hospital, we had to pay big money. It was very difficult. Very difficult!<sup>163</sup>

However, those sorrowful recollections concern only respondents' first years of life in Canada. As it becomes apparent from the interviews, former Ostarbeiters tended to perceive those years as a transitional period, a passage from an immigrant period to a stable and satisfactory life in Canada. As most of narrators indicated, "easier" and "better" lives began when they were able to buy their own houses and started private and independent life in better accommodations.<sup>164</sup> Among other factors, finding better jobs, earning more money, and sending children to schools were also named.

Most respondents defined that transitional period in 2-6 years from the time they arrived in Canada. For example, Helen Yunuk recalled:

I think it didn't take that much time [when things finally have come right]. I would say that after 2 years our life returned to normal. It was not much easier later, everybody had to work. But it was already a normal life. You know, nobody was afraid that something bad would happen, or something like that. My father worked at the factory, sometimes he worked 7 days a week. But he liked to be busy. I think that from 1951 when I finished school, I started to work in 1955, so I would say it took up to 3 years for us to achieve quite good conditions of life. Yes.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Kateryna Oliinyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>163</sup> Olga Sukhovij, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011.

<sup>164</sup> For example, see: Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Lesia Kachka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 21, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>165</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011.

From all my informants, only Olga Sukhovyj mentioned a transitional period of 10 years:

When I had been in Canada for 10 years. Then it was easier. At the beginning I was crying, I did not want Canada. I did not like Canada. But then, when I got my job, we had our house, our life became different. I like Canada now.<sup>166</sup>

#### **2.4.5. *Connection with the Old country***

Having arranged their lives in Canada, most former Ostarbeiters did not lose their connection with Ukraine. Many of them mentioned that they supported their families in Ukraine by sending parcels and money for them. Most informants indicated that they had returned to Ukraine from one to four times, primarily in the 1970s and 1990s.<sup>167</sup> A few respondents, however, said that they had never visited in Ukraine after the war: “I didn’t leave anything good there, and I don’t want to go there.”<sup>168</sup> “I don’t have anybody to go to and I don’t have any desire.”<sup>169</sup>

Regarding correspondence with families in Ukraine, not all Ostarbeiters were allowed to write letters while they were working in Germany. So, for many of them communication with their families resumed from Canada during the 1950s. However, not everyone was able to stay in touch with their relatives through letters. In the Soviet Union, those who had any connection with people abroad were under suspicion and even risked to lose their jobs because of that. Under the fear of prosecution, censorship prevented people from the honest description of their life in the USSR.<sup>170</sup> Thus, some Ostarbeiters indicated that their family members or friends could not write, at least all what they wanted, about themselves and their post-war life in their letters. Anna Stecyk said that her mother was arrested when police had found out that her daughter was alive and sent her a letter from Canada.<sup>171</sup> In 1957, Olena Ivasyshyn wrote a letter to her friend Nadia, former Ostarbeiter, who came back to Ukraine after the war. For her work in Germany, Nadia was exiled to

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<sup>166</sup> Olga Sukhovyj, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011.

<sup>167</sup> The earliest recalled year of trip to Ukraine that was 1965.

<sup>168</sup> Emiliia Svitalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>169</sup> Lesia Kachka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 21, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>170</sup> For example, see: Stephania Riopka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olha Kotsur, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>171</sup> Anna Stetsyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).



Siberia. After receiving a letter from Olena Ivasyshyn, Nadia was called to appear before militia and prohibited to correspond with Olena at all.<sup>172</sup>

For Halyna Yunyk's mother, a former Ostarbeiter, correspondence with her family was also lost:

Our grandmother was with us. But her sisters stayed in Ukraine. And my grandmother wrote them after the war. One sister answered, because she did not live in Ukraine anymore, she lived in Estonia, Vilnius. So, she answered. But the other sister lived where she had been living usually, in her town. And she wrote her: do not write me because my son is studying at a Flight Academy, and if they find out that I have connections abroad, they will dismiss him. She had one more sister who lived in the same town, her daughter was an interpreter during the Nazi occupation. And she was exiled to Siberia for 10 years, when she was 17, because she had been an interpreter. She had to be because she studied German at school. And they said she would be able to understand. And she was sent to Siberia for that. And she came back. And the other sister wrote: do not write us, because it will be worse for us if you continue to write. My mother, when she heard that, she also had 4 sisters in Ukraine, she didn't even try to contact them.<sup>173</sup>

However, even limited correspondence, several trips to Ukraine, and rumours about the treatment of the former Nazi workers in the USSR were enough to persuade former Ostarbeiters that they had made a right choice when decided not to come back home. There are answers from several respondents to the question "Have you ever regretted that you did not come back home to Ukraine?": "I would not go home. I have been there 3 times. I see that nothing has changed there,"<sup>174</sup>; "We heard what was going on in Ukraine, and we were not pleased with that (...) They wrote me from home that I should be where I was [in Canada], because it was easier for me there. My uncle told me that. I did not intend to return,"<sup>175</sup> "No, never. I was very happy that I did not return home. Who knows what fate I would have had and what places I would have been taken,"<sup>176</sup> "No, I do not regret. When we were in Ukraine, I saw that, I realized that I had chosen a better way [immigrated to Canada]."<sup>177</sup>

There is coherence in opinions among narrators: generally estimating their life in Canada, nobody expressed his or her regret about immigration to Canada. For example, Helen Yunuk conveyed impressions of her father-Ostarbeiter: "My farther always praised

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<sup>172</sup> Olena Ivasyshyn, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>173</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011.

<sup>174</sup> Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

<sup>175</sup> Evheniia Senkus-Stashynska, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011.

<sup>176</sup> Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

<sup>177</sup> Jaroslava Pecheniuk, interviewed by Iroida Wynnnyckyj. Sudbury, ON. July 6, 2001 (UCRDC Archive)

Canada very much. He said that his best years were spent in Canada.”<sup>178</sup> Lesia Kostuik recalled the feelings of her husband, a former forced worker:

He was very satisfied. He said, “It is my country.” I told him, “Let’s go to our native land, I spent 60 years there.” But he replied, “It is my country [Canada], it gave me life.” (...) And then when he came here [to Canada], it was a free county. Everything was working. A man there is free to accumulate, to take care, to build up, to do whatever he wants. But do not kill, do not do harm to anybody. And you know, he became used to that life so much that he said, “It is my native land, I have gotten accustomed to it, I was given life here.”<sup>179</sup>

So, Ukrainian Ostarbeiters constituted a significant part of the post-war DP immigration to Canada. Former forced workers expanded the existing Ukrainian Canadian community and brought their own understanding of Ukrainian identity. As one may expect, due to the dramatic war experience, Ostarbeiters would eventually forge distinct shared memory of the forced labour. Next chapter explores what collective memory, if any, was formed about the Ostarbeiters’ experience in the Ukrainian-Canadian context.

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<sup>178</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011.

<sup>179</sup> Lesia (Alexandra) Kostuik, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 13, 2011.

## Chapter III

### Collective Memory about Ostarbeiters

Nearly sixty years have passed since former Ostarbeiters resettled to Canada from post-war Europe. As part of the third wave of Ukrainian immigration, forced workers had their own shared experience that distinguished them from other DPs and previous Ukrainian immigrants in Canada.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate whether a particular kind of collective memory was developed regarding that distinct experience of forced labour for the Nazis. To that end, I will first explain how I employ the concept of collective memory in my research before exploring collective memory about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters. Certain parallels will be drawn between the nature of collective memory about Ostarbeiters and other DPs, namely political refugees. Finally, this chapter ends with the suggestion to revise the established practice in Ukrainian-Canadian historiography to group all Ukrainian DPs under the title “political refugees.”

#### 3.1. Collective memory: theoretical background

The term “collective memory” is widely used in the public sphere and across different academic disciplines. However, it does not have a precise definition that is common for all spheres in which it is used. I do not aspire to invent the only “right” or “ultimate” definition, but will explain what particular meaning I attach to the term “collective memory” in my work.

In my research, I attempt to combine some insights from several approaches to collective memory studies. Mainly, I draw on two concepts: first, the conception of “collective memory” proposed by American anthropologist James Wertsch in his study *Voices of Collective Remembering* (2002);<sup>180</sup> second, the process of constructing an ethnic identity on the basis of a collective narrative, according to cultural sociologist Stephen Cornell.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press), 2002.  
James Wertsch is a Professor of Sociocultural Anthropology at the Washington University.

<sup>181</sup> Stephen Cornell, “That’s the Story of Our Life,” in *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, eds. Paul Spickard and W. Burroughs (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 41-56.

“Collective memory” emerged as a subject of scholarly inquiry in the early twentieth century, but it was only in the 1980s that it was given renewed academic interest.<sup>182</sup> Some recent works consider collective memory a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by the group.<sup>183</sup> The purpose of collective memory is to offer a normative view of the past that creates a positive present image of the group and justifies its current needs and goals.<sup>184</sup> In other words, collective memory is an important basis for the creation and maintenance of group coherency and its identity. The way the past is remembered is directly influenced by present circumstances which affect what events have to be remembered. Individuals redefine the past to fit the present.<sup>185</sup>

According to James Wertsch, collective memory is best understood as an active process that involves agents and cultural tools.<sup>186</sup> The former implies people who actively select and modify particular versions of their past. Cultural tools, according to Wertsch, include calendars, written records, paintings, icons, museums, monuments, and rituals of commemoration; these constitute the external support for memory and forgetting. Among cultural tools used for remembering, narratives such as monographs, history textbooks, novels, films, Internet publications, and publications in mass media play a central role.<sup>187</sup>

What defines such an important role of narrative in collective memory? James Wertsch refers to broader inquiries into connections between narrative and human consciousness. A central point in such studies is the omnipresence and importance of narrative in human activity. People tend to use narrative to recount and interpret somebody’s actions. Narratives serve as “cognitive” instruments for organizing our understanding of the past.<sup>188</sup> Stephen Cornell also emphasizes that the power of narrative comes from its sense-making properties. Since the narrative, as a medium, orders and frames events and

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<sup>182</sup> Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations, Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering* 69 (2000): 127. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2902903>. Accessed October 10, 2011.

<sup>183</sup> Henry Roediga, Franklin Zaromb, and Andrew Butler, “The Role of Repeated Retrieval in Shaping Collective Memory,” in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, eds. Pascal Boyer and James Wertsch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 138-170.

<sup>184</sup> Juanjo Igartua, and Dario Paez, “Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events: The Case of the Spanish Civil War,” in *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspective*, eds. James Penneaker, Dario Paez, and Bernard Rime (Manham, New Jersey, 1997), 81.

<sup>185</sup> James Pennebaker, and Becky Banasik, “On the Creation and Maintenance of Collective Memories: History as Social Psychology,” in *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspective*, eds. James Penneaker, Dario Paez, and Bernard Rime (Manham, New Jersey, 1997), 6.

<sup>186</sup> Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, 67.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-62. In its many uses, narrative denotes any prosaic text that consists of completed sentences linked into a plot.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

experiences of the group in a story, it assigns a certain coherence and meaning to what might otherwise seem like isolated episodes. It also places the group in the centre of the story and specifies the group's relationship to those events. Thus it makes sense of events and of the group itself.<sup>189</sup>

Among the main features of collective memory are a single committed perspective and an absence of ambiguity.<sup>190</sup> Stories, or accounts organized into plots with distinct characters and circumstances, tend to be simple and condensed, with reduced and simplified details. Several such stories create a narrative. Reconstructive activity is inherent in collective memory. Some aspects of the event are forgotten, while others are retrieved and remembered. Collective memory is also elaborated: those ideas that are coherent with the accepted discourse are emphasized.<sup>191</sup>

Since collective memory fosters the group's "togetherness," it is important for a collective such as an ethnic group to develop collective memory about itself. Ethnic groups, in the most general definition, claim a sense of "togetherness" by insisting on shared bonds of kinship and shared history, culture, and experience.

Former Ukrainian Ostarbeiters are part of the Ukrainian ethnic group in Canada. Thus, in theory, the formation of their identity is dependent on a construction of their collective memory in the Canadian context. Stephen Cornell observes that ethnic identities often take a narrative form: the process of the creation of an ethnic identity is usually accompanied by the creation of a narrative that conveys understanding about what it means to be a member of the group. Although a story might be told in different ways, "ultimately it can be reduced to something along the lines of 'we are the people who...', in which the lacuna becomes a tale of some sort, a record of events."<sup>192</sup> Such a narrative has a subject (a group), action (what happened), and value: "Constructing an ethnic identity involves, among other things, a gradual layering on and connecting of events and meanings, the construction of a collective narrative."<sup>193</sup>

Identity narratives and their production are bound up in power relations. The identity of the group can be formulated not only by insiders, but also by the outsiders who tell stories about others in their own terms, thus projecting a different identity onto the group. Narrative

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<sup>189</sup> Cornell, *That's the Story of Our Life*, 44.

<sup>190</sup> Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, 162.

<sup>191</sup> Juanjo Igartua, and Dario Paez, *Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events: The Case of the Spanish Civil War*, 80.

<sup>192</sup> Cornell, *That's the Story of Our Life*, 42.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

construction might be a contested process since some groups have greater resources for storytelling and greater access to the public arena. It may be an in-group as well as an intergroup issue. Members of the group may have different versions of their past, and one subgroup may have better resources to promote their narratives in the public discourse.<sup>194</sup>

In summary, the basic premise of my research is that collective memory is an active process through which social groups construct their past and their identity in order to position themselves effectively in today's context. This process involves different kinds of cultural tools, among which narratives are the most important. In the remainder of this chapter, those theoretical considerations are applied to the particular case of the construction of collective memory about Ostarbeiters in the Ukrainian-Canadian context. It is important to emphasize that I do not regard collective memory about Ostarbeiters as rooted in individual recollections of former forced workers. Rather, collective memory is "the public image" of Ostarbeiters which can be discovered through the analysis of cultural tools, particularly narratives, produced in the public discourse to be shared with those who did not experience forced labour during the war.

### **3.2. Collective memory about Ostarbeiters in Canada**

To understand how Ostarbeiters present themselves (or how others present them) in the public sphere and what sort of collective memory is fostered in regard to forced labour, one should analyze narrative resources about the forced labour. To this effect, I examine the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography of Ostarbeiters, look into memoirs and publications by/about the former Ostarbeiters, and try to find out if any organizations were founded by the former forced labourers in Canada. When possible, I also put this analysis in a broader context of collective memory formation about other DPs. My purpose is to discover what group – political refugees or former forced workers – were more successful in the creation of collective memory about themselves and why.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Cornell, *That's the Story of Our Life*, 47.

<sup>195</sup> From this perspective, it is important to clarify what categories constituted the Ukrainian DPs group. So, apart from Ostarbeiters, there were political refugees, namely members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) who had failed to create an independent Ukraine during the war and hoped to continue their struggle abroad; soldiers of the Galician Division (German military formation made up of Ukrainians to fight against the Soviet officials); intelligentsia who had suffered or feared future repression by the Soviet government (the clergy, artists, scholars); students (involved in Ukrainian social, cultural and political organizations, mainly members of OUN); concentration-camps inmates (for the most part, these were people active in the Ukrainian nationalist movement); and, finally, merchants and wealthier peasants (who had already been prosecuted by the Soviet authorities or associated with the Germany administration). So, the vast majority of those people were political refugees who fled Ukraine because of their political convictions

### 3.2.1. *Canadian academic discourse about forced workers*

Analysis of the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography of Displaced Persons will illustrate how memory about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters has been developed in academic discourse.

In general, Ukrainian-Canadian historiography cannot boast about extensive, thorough research of the Ukrainian DPs' history in Canada. Only a few scholars have approached this topic as a separate domain of their research, while other researches have addressed the topic from different perspectives depending on the sphere of their principal research interests.

Until the 1990s, most researchers of Ukrainian-Canadian history were almost exclusively focused on the history of the first Ukrainian immigrants. As Frances Swyripa demonstrated in 1982, Ukrainian-Canadian historiography had a tendency to present Ukrainian Canadians as "respectable to the main society" and evaluate the community life in predominantly positive and progressive terms.<sup>196</sup> This tendency characterizes those few works that did focus, even if briefly, in the 1980s, on the history of Ukrainian DPs and their impact on the Ukrainian Canadian community. Among those accounts were works by John Kolasky (1979)<sup>197</sup> and Michael Marunchak (1982).<sup>198</sup> Kolasky's book reflects the author's political outlook and is written from a distinct anti-communist position. The author is interested in the history of Ukrainian DPs only in the context of their relations with communists in Canada. He provides a rather idealistic and narrow estimation of the Ukrainian DPs' impact on the Ukrainian Canadian community as one that challenged the activity of the pro-communist organizations and contributed to their decline.

Michael Marunchak's study *The Ukrainian Canadians: A History* views the immigration of the Ukrainian DPs to Canada as a part of general history of Ukrainians in Canada. He defines all DPs as "political refugees" and "completely anti-communists." Writing from a nationalist position, the author credits the DPs with the growth of Ukrainian

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and justifiable fear of prosecution by the Soviet officials after the end of the war. (Orest Subtelny, "Ukrainian Political Refugees: An Historical Overview," in *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons after World War II*, eds. Wsevolod Isajiw, Yury Boshyk, and Roman Senkus (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 9-14).

<sup>196</sup> Frances Swyripa, "A Survey of Ukrainian-Canadian Historiography," in *Heritage in Transition: Essays in the History of Ukrainians in Canada*, ed. Manoly Lupul (Toronto, Ont: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 318.

<sup>197</sup> John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada* (Toronto: PMA Books, 1979).

<sup>198</sup> Michael Marunchak, *The Ukrainian Canadians: A History* (Winnipeg: Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Canada, 1982).

Canadians in different spheres of political, economic, and cultural life in the 1950s-1970s. In his opinion, the DPs brought a “renewed patriotism” into the Ukrainian Canadian community.

The next publication, Orest Subtelny’s book *Ukrainians in North America: An Illustrated History* (1991),<sup>199</sup> contains a comprehensive overview of the DPs’ post-war experience from the time of their arrival to the late 1980s. The author briefly describes the DPs’ war experience and the Ukrainian community’s efforts to assist DPs in their resettlement to North America. He especially dwells on descriptions of different social, professional, and cultural organizations that were formed in North America by DPs from the 1950s to the 1980s, providing a very positive estimation of that network in comparison to the one previously established by the first two waves of immigrants. However, certain drawbacks, such as the absence of any references to available facts and a reliance only on secondary sources, indicate a lack of intellectual rigor and generally expose it as a compilation rather than an innovative work.

Like Orest Subtelny, Vic Satzewich in *The Ukrainian Diaspora* (2002) also describes the Ukrainian DPs in the context of Ukrainian immigration to North America.<sup>200</sup> He summarizes the history of DPs from the time of their emigration from Ukraine to resettlement in North America and considers certain conflicts within the diaspora over the DPs. In his mind, the influx of new DP immigrants did not bring the diaspora into a coherent and united front, but fractured its organized life with imported divisions and hostilities. But in this regard Vic Satzewich adopts conclusions of other authors rather than developing his own.

Apart from these studies addressing the Ukrainian DPs’ history in the context of researchers’ broader interests, there are also a few scholars who have approached this topic as a separate domain of their studies.

In the early 1980s, Yury Boshyk and Boris Balan prepared a selected bibliography and guide to political refugees and Displaced Persons (1982).<sup>201</sup> The authors located, catalogued, and described an enormous number of published and unpublished primary sources that originated during 1945-1954 and were related to Ukrainian political refugees. On the basis of this bibliographical guide, many articles were written and presented at the conference in

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<sup>199</sup> Orest Subtelny, *Ukrainians in North America: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 189-249.

<sup>200</sup> Vic Satzewich, *The Ukrainian Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2002). Vic Satzewich is a Professor of Sociology at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario).

<sup>201</sup> Yury Boshyk and Boris Balan, *Political Refugees and "Displaced Persons", 1945-1954: A Selected Bibliography and Guide to Research With Special Reference to Ukrainians* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1982), 424. At that time, Yury Boshuk was an Assistant Professor at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures (University of Toronto).



Toronto the next year. They were planned as a unified research project intended for publication. However, that project did not evolve into systematic scholarly research. For some reason, prepared articles were published only nine years later in a collection of papers *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons After World War Two* (1992) that became the first major study in Ukrainian Canadian historiography on Ukrainian refugees.<sup>202</sup>

The purpose of that collective work was to look at the Ukrainian refugees as emigrants in order to fully understand the process of their integration into the host society. To that end, that collection examines closely the DPs' camp experience from various perspectives, such as economic and organizational structures of the camps, political life, religion, education, scholarship, and cultural life at the camps. Soviet repatriation efforts and the resettlement of Ukrainians in the USA and Canada are presented by two and four articles respectively. Unfortunately, most studies from this collective work remained at that initial stage of exploration and have not evolved into further research.

Through the 1980s and the 1990s, only two leading scholars, Lubomyr Luciuk and Ihor Stebelsky, worked persistently on the history of Ukrainian DPs in Canada.

Lubomyr Luciuk examines different aspects of this topic: immigration of the Ukrainian DPs to Canada in 1945-1951, the policy of the Canadian government towards new immigrants, lobbying efforts of various Ukrainian Canadian agencies in favour of DPs, and political divisions among DPs. Most importantly, Lubomyr Luciuk provides an interesting insight into the problem of post-war tensions between the third wave of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada and the previous two waves. To his mind, DPs were not voluntary economic immigrants like most pre-war Ukrainian immigrants to Canada. Believing that their refugee existence was temporary, they felt a need to return to Ukraine. Thus, DPs created a distinct cultural and material landscape with the cultural baggage they brought from the camps and distanced themselves from the rest of Ukrainian Canadians who did not appreciate their political activity.

Ihor Stebelsky's studies provide a detailed description of the Ukrainian DPs' resettlement to Canada, such as estimated numbers of DPs and an elaborated picture of their destination and settlement. He also tries to assess the demographic, economic, and social impact of the refugees on the Ukrainian Canadian community. Like Lubomyr Luciuk, Professor Stebelsky also recognizes the "strong political convictions" of Ukrainian

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<sup>202</sup> Wsevolod Isajiw, Yury Boshyk, and Roman Senkus, eds. *The Refugee Experience: Ukrainian Displaced Persons After World War Two* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1992).

immigrants and characterizes them as nationalists who viewed Canada as a temporary refuge; he also agrees that DPs established their separate organizations and refused to join the established Ukrainian community in Canada. But he estimates the impact of the Ukrainian DPs on the Ukrainian Canadian community as generally constructive, since, in his mind, DPs strengthened the position of the Ukrainian language, contributed to the increase of professional and technical occupations among the Ukrainians, and fostered Ukrainian organizational life.

The last and most recent work on Ukrainian DPs is Marta Dyczok's *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees* (2000). The author explores the role of the refugees in international relations during the first post-war years (mainly 1943-1952) in Europe by looking at the Ukrainian DPs as a significant case study. It is a unique, comprehensive study in Ukrainian-Canadian historiography that thoroughly examines international policy towards Ukrainian refugees.

In conclusion, before the 1990s, the history of Ukrainian DPs as a separate research topic had been mostly overlooked by mainstream Ukrainian-Canadian historical research. There are few authors who have purposely worked on the history of Ukrainian DPs in Canada. For the most part, they approached this subject from various perspectives, which made them single contributors to the particular areas of DPs history. Interestingly enough, Lubomyr Luciuk and Ihor Stebelsky, the leading scholars who have been working persistently on the history of Ukrainian DPs in Canada, are sons of Ukrainian political refugees. So, until now, little scholarship has been done on Ukrainian Displaced Persons in the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography. In contrast to the scholarship that deals with the first two waves of the Ukrainian immigration to Canada, the third wave has received little attention.<sup>203</sup>

To this day, researchers have focused almost exclusively on the history of Ukrainian DPs in Canada within a limited framework, mainly 1940s and first half of the 1950s. Ukrainian-Canadian scholarship has tended to generalize all DPs under the title "political refugees" without paying attention to the different categories within this group.

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<sup>203</sup> For the most recent bibliographic information refer to: Orest Martynowych, comp. "Ukrainian-Canadian History, 1891- Present: A List of English-language Secondary Sources (Monographs, Books chapters, Collections, Articles), (Winnipeg: Centre for Ukrainian Canadian Studies, University of Manitoba, 2011)", *University of Manitoba*, June 2011, [http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/ukrainian\\_canadian\\_studies/media/Ukrainian\\_Canadian\\_History\\_biblio.pdf](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/ukrainian_canadian_studies/media/Ukrainian_Canadian_History_biblio.pdf) Accessed June 15, 2011.

Thus, as is evident in this historiographical overview, Ukrainian-Canadian scholars have not, so far, addressed the history of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters as a separate research topic. In addition, Ostarbeiters are barely mentioned in the context of DPs studies. Their discussion is usually limited to a few sentences when authors describe the reasons for displacement during the war or briefly mention different categories within the Ukrainian DPs. In other words, within the Ukrainian-Canadian academic sphere, there is no distinct narrative about Ostarbeiters that could have nourished the collective memory about them.

### 3.2.2. *Ostarbeiters' experience as represented in Canadian newspapers*

This section addresses the question of the extent to which information about Ostarbeiters' experiences was accessible in the public domain, specifically in Canadian newspapers. In the case studies offered here, issues of *Toronto Daily Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Ukrainskyi Holos (Ukrainian Voice)*, and *Novyi Shklich (New Pathway)* are examined.<sup>204</sup>

Since most DPs settled in Ontario and Quebec, the overview of publications in *Toronto Daily Star* and *The Globe and Mail*, two of Canada's largest newspapers based in Toronto, seems a fair representation of publications about or by former Ostarbeiters. These newspapers' issues are available through an online archive that makes the search for required information quite efficient.<sup>205</sup>

**Toronto Daily Star.** As my search for possible articles about forced labour proves, there were practically no publications about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in this newspaper through 1941 to 2008.<sup>206</sup>

General information about Nazi forced labourers appeared quite regularly in *Toronto Daily Star* during 1942-1945. Mainly, the "slave labourers" were mentioned in the context of recruitment of foreign civilians for Nazi economic needs. Throughout 1945-1949, the "slaves" were named in the context of UNRRA activities, DPs problems, and the prosecution of German leaders for different crimes, including the exploitation of forced labour. From the

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<sup>204</sup> I do not deny that some local newspapers might have had some publications about the former forced laborers. However, at this stage of my research I avoided such an analysis of local publications for two main reasons. First, it is beyond the purpose and the scope of my present thesis. Second, local newspapers reach a narrower readership than national newspapers do. So, not being generally accessible public sources of information, they are not as representative as national newspapers in regard to my research questions.

<sup>205</sup> ProQuest. <http://micromedia.pagesofthepast.ca/default.asp?sessionID=20111207212500157:857150>, <http://heritage.theglobeandmail.com/default.asp?sessionID=20111207212500157:857150>

<sup>206</sup> The year 1941 was chosen since it was the year that forced deportation of the Ukrainian workers began. The electronic archive covers *Toronto Daily Star's* publication until 2008 inclusive.

1950s onward, references to former forced workers appeared only sporadically when the Nazis' atrocities and war crimes were mentioned in the 1990s, when the topic of the compensation policy of the German government for the Nazi victims was mentioned.

Only once, in February 1945, in reference to the nationality of labourers were the forced workers from Ukraine mentioned. Another reference appeared 50 years later in the bibliographic sketch of a person who was a Ukrainian Ostarbeiter.<sup>207</sup> Two other comments were made about two Ukrainians in "Death Notices" with brief information from their biographies which indicated that the deceased persons were Ostarbeiters (February 7, 2004, and May 7, 2007).<sup>208</sup>

In general, when discussion concerned Ostarbeiters, "Russian" or "Soviet" workers were mentioned, without referring to Ukrainian nationality in particular. Typically, information about forced workers was concise. However, while several extensive stories described the experiences of Polish Jews, French, and Austrian workers in Germany,<sup>209</sup> no single comprehensive story about the particular experience of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters was presented in *Toronto Daily Star* from 1941 to 2008.

**The Globe and Mail.** My findings from *The Globe and Mail* are quite similar to those from *Toronto Daily Star*. The analysis included publications from 1941 through 2009.<sup>210</sup> As in the case of the previous newspaper, only three "Death Notices" announced briefly that the deceased persons were Ukrainian Ostarbeiters (June 14, 2003; May 8, 2007; September 15 2007). However, in contrast to *Toronto Daily Star*, *The Globe and Mail* was silent during the war about the recruitment of foreign workers by the Germans. A surge of information in this regard emerged during the 1990s and 2000s when the topic of exploitation of the "slave labourers" by the German industry during the war was brought up in the context of the contemporary compensation policy to former forced labourers by the German government. Usually, no references to the nationality of the workers were made. But very

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<sup>207</sup> This article appeared in 2007 and was devoted to the death of Petro Sydorenko, a former technical illustrator at the Ontario Ministry of Transport and director of the art school. See: "Artistry despite hardship," *Toronto Daily Star*, May 14, 2007, <http://micromedia.pagesofthepast.ca/zyPageView.asp> (accessed December 15, 2011).

<sup>208</sup> Only in these three cases particularly the term "Ostarbeiter" was used. In all other cases, terms "forced" or "slaved" workers were used.

<sup>209</sup> "Laval, Arch-Conspirator," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 1, 1945. "Six In Her Family Shot Still Wakes Up Screaming," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 22, 1946. "The Faith Hitler Couldn't Break", *Toronto Daily Star*, May 21, 1966. "Decades of Delay: Wages of Nazi Slavery," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 28, 1999.

<sup>210</sup> The explanation of this time frame is the same as in case with *Toronto Daily Star*.

often the stories about Jewish workers in the concentration camps appeared.<sup>211</sup> Only in one article dealing with the policy of the German government's compensation were Ukrainian forced workers mentioned among other nationalities.<sup>212</sup> They were also briefly mentioned once in the context of UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) history.<sup>213</sup> All in all, like *Toronto Daily Star*, *The Globe and Mail* did not discuss at length any specific experiences of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters.

***Ukrainskyi Holos (Ukrainian Voice)*.** The review of the two above newspapers demonstrated the limited scope of information about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters offered for the general Canadian readership. It is appropriate here to address the question of how the Ukrainian media covered the same topic.

The *Ukrainian Voice*, the oldest and one of the major Ukrainian newspapers in Canada, was founded in 1910 and soon embraced the entire Ukrainian community across Canada. Until recently, it was published exclusively in Ukrainian. A review of publications concerning Ostarbeiters in this newspaper should be fairly representative of how developed the collective memory about forced labourers in the Ukrainian Canadian community is. I began my review of *Ukrainian Voice* numbers from May 1945, when the problem of Displaced Persons became an international issue and the possibility of the Ukrainian DPs' immigration to Canada entered public discourse. As I presumed, that fact most likely provoked a number of publications about the Ukrainian DPs, including the forced workers, in the newspaper.

The topic of Ukrainian Displaced Persons was regularly brought up in the paper from May 1945 to 1956, peaking in 1946-1949. As a recurrent topic of interest, this subject disappeared from the pages of the concerned newspaper after 1957.<sup>214</sup>

In the surveyed articles, all Ukrainian DPs were generalized under the term *skytaltsi* (wanderers). Different categories within this group, such as political refugees or former forced workers, were barely mentioned. *Ukrainian Voice* presented *skytaltsi* as victims of the former Nazi regime during the war and contemporary victims of the Soviet officials who tried to repatriate them forcibly. By describing terrible life circumstances at the DP camps, this

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<sup>211</sup> For example, see: "Blood-Curdling Book On Nazis Somewhat Flawed," *The Globe and Mail*, May 4, 1996. "Nazis' Slave Labourers," *The Globe and Mail*, February 17, 1999. "I Would Love To Hear Her Again," *The Globe and Mail* December 14, 2006. "Auschwitz Beyond The Symbolism," *The Globe and Mail*, February 19, 2005.

<sup>212</sup> "Nazi Slaves To Be Paid \$7-Billion," *The Globe and Mail*, July 18, 2000.

<sup>213</sup> "Freedom Fighters The World Tried To Forget," *The Globe and Mail*, September 15, 2007.

<sup>214</sup> Only two articles in 1961 and 1962 (numbers 37 and 48 respectively) returned to the topic of Ukrainian DPs.

newspaper frequently appealed to its readers with a plea to assist “compatriots,” “Ukrainian sisters and brothers,” through the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Ukrainian Canadian Relief Fund.<sup>215</sup> During 1947-1952, several articles were devoted to the resettlement of the Ukrainian DPs to Canada; their adjustment to the new country and integration into the Ukrainian Canadian community were praised.<sup>216</sup>

Detailed stories about the experience of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters, however, did not appear on the newspapers’ pages. From May to September 1945, there were several articles about the Nazi occupation of Ukraine with concise notices that Ukrainians were forcibly deported to work for the Nazi Germany. My overview of 932 issues of *Ukrainian Voice* from 1945 to 1963, inclusive, showed that Ukrainian Ostarbeiters, with a few exceptions, were not distinguished as a separate category within the Ukrainian DPs. Ostarbeiters were mentioned as a subgroup of the DPs only 9 times, usually in a few sentences, only. Of those 9 mentions, only 3 articles presented more or less elaborated stories about forced workers as a people with distinctive war experience.<sup>217</sup> Obviously, the scope of presented information was too narrow and irregular to be an influential means for the creation of collective memory about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters.<sup>218</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the term “Ostarbeiter” was never used in the reviewed articles. Instead, different synonyms were applied, such as “forced workers” (*prymusovi robitnyky*), “slaves”, “slaved workers”( *nevilnyky, raby*).

**Novyi Shliakh (New Pathway).** In order to supplement the analysis of Ukrainian Canadian periodicals, I chose one more Ukrainian newspaper – *Novyi Shliakh* (New Pathway). It has been an official organ of the Ukrainian National Federation, and has supported the positions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (Melnyk faction) from the 1940s. Founded in Edmonton in 1930, it was moved to Toronto in 1977. I presume that this newspaper was not initially intended for general readership since it conveyed a narrow

<sup>215</sup> For example, see: “Riatuimo Svoikh Ridnukh,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, June 27, 1945. “Potreba Dopomohy Skytalsiam Bilsha Yak Koly,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, June 5, 1946. “Potribne Shche Odne Velyke Zusyllisa Na Pomich Skytalsiam,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, November 3, 1948. “Pamiataimo Pro Skytalsiv V Nimechchyni I Avstrii,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, July 29, 1949.

<sup>216</sup> For example, see: “Pershi Vrazhinnia V Kanadi,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, November 23, 1949. “Na Khvyliakh Okeanu,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, October 4, 1950.

<sup>217</sup> “Aby Tilky Ne Do Rosii,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, August 29, 1945. “Lysty Z Evropy,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, July 16, 1947. “Nedavne Mynule,” *Ukrainskyi Holos*, September 7, 1955.

<sup>218</sup> Unfortunately, I had to cease my review of *Ukrainian Voice* publications at year 1963. The Ukrainian Museum of Canada, the organization which provided me with archives of this newspaper, does not have any issues after 1963. I applied to other institutions in Saskatoon in search for this newspaper. However, my attempts were unsuccessful since further issues of *Ukrainian Voice* have not been compiled consistently in Saskatoon. Had I reviewed at least the recent publications from the 1990s-2000s, my analysis of this newspaper could have been considerably more refined. In future, I will try to fill this gap by extending my search of the missing issues outside of Saskatoon.

and specific political ideology. But, to my mind, it is a good source for the analysis of publicly available information about Ostarbeiters as presented through a Ukrainian Canadian newspaper by a certain fraction of political refugees. The random choice of 39 numbers of *Novyi Shliakh* through 1970 to 1984 showed that no information about Ostarbeiters appeared in the concerned issues. It prompts me to consider that this newspaper was not interested in disseminating information about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters among the Ukrainian Canadian readers.<sup>219</sup>

### 3.2.3. *Forced labourers' memoirs*

Although memoirs are construed as an act of individual remembering, these first-person narratives became tools for collective remembering after entering the public sphere. The search for Ukrainian Ostarbeiters' memories published in Canada was not easy. I have been looking for them for a long time by exploring different library catalogues and online resources.<sup>220</sup> As a result, at the time of writing this chapter, I was only able to discover 4 memoirs written by former Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada.<sup>221</sup>

Because only a few memoirs were identified, it is hard to trace common tendencies in Ostarbeiters' memoirs. However, certain general observations can be made. All four authors were pre-war residents of Central or Eastern Ukraine. They were taken to Germany at the age of 16-17 to work in industry. After the war, they migrated to other European countries and finally settled in Canada in the 1950s, where they spent the rest of their lives. Their memoirs were published in 1989, 1996, and 2004.

Nicholas Szostaczuk's memoir *Vid Temriavy Do Svitla: Spomynys* is rather different from other memoirs. The author describes his experience in Germany very briefly since his

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<sup>219</sup> I admit that my analysis of this newspaper needs to be extended. However, as in the case with *Ukrainian Voice*, I was not able to review the issues of *Novyi Shliakh* systematically since they have not been compiled consecutively by any organization in Saskatoon.

<sup>220</sup> WorldCat, a global network of library content and services, <http://www.worldcat.org>. University of Toronto Libraries, online catalogue, <http://onsearch.library.utoronto.ca/>. University of Saskatchewan Library, online catalogue, Interlibrary Loan / Document Delivery service <http://library.usask.ca/>. University of Alberta Libraries, online catalogue <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/>. Harvard Libraries, online catalogue <http://holliscatalog.harvard.edu/>. In addition, since September 2010 I have been involved in the project concerning Ukrainian Canadian personal memoirs, coordinated by Natalia Khanenko-Friesen. This research project focuses on the phenomenon of personal memoir writing by Ukrainians in Canada. On the contemporary stage, our task consists in creating a bibliography of Ukrainian Canadian personal memoirs by searching various library catalogues and communicating with different resource centers. Being engaged in this project, I have been simultaneously tracing Ostarbeiters' memoirs in particular.

<sup>221</sup> Nicholas Szostaczuk, *Vid Temriavy Do Svitla: Spomyny* (Winnipeg, 1989). Antonina Khelemendyk-Kokot, *Kolhospne Dytynstvo I Nimetska Nevolia: Spohady* (Toronto, 1989). Peter Anton, *A Life of Hope: Memoirs of Nadia the Survivor* (Winnipeg, 2004). Tonia Demczynna, *From East to West* (Belleville, Ont.: Essence Pub., 1996).

main focus is the religious life and his activities as a Baptist missionary. All other memoirs depict in detail the circumstances of departure to Germany, life and work at the factories, liberation, escape from the Soviet repatriation missions, residence in DP camps, and migration to other countries in search of work. Life in Canada did not merit the authors' special attention in their memoirs. Two authors, Nicholas Szostaczuk and Antonina Khelemendyk-Kokot, describe not only their experience in Germany, but concentrate also on the pre-war years and discuss all the horrors of living under the Soviet authorities.

In general, those memoirs are a good source of information about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters' war experiences. They frame the narrative about forced workers' experiences in a distinct way, unanimously placing the emphasis on the "slavery," hardship, sorrow, suffering, cruel treatment, and hunger sustained by Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Germany. In other words, they represent the past in a very emotional way. Certain research in collective memory has showed that artistic creations of a narrative type produce more emotional activity and reflection if they insist on the severe suffering and catastrophes rather than propose a neutral or ambivalent view of the event. Thereby, they develop memory and form beliefs and attitudes.<sup>222</sup> The same might be said of the Ostarbeiters' memoirs. Their presentations of war experiences as traumatic events may induce emotional responses in the readers and facilitate memorizing of what has been read. Thus, in theory, those memoirs might be an effective instrument for the creation of collective memory about Ukrainian Ostarbeiters.

Identification of Ostarbeiters' memoirs alone does not provide us with an idea of to what extent those books were available to readers, consumed, and comprehended in the way intended by their authors. The existence of a few memoirs does not imply direct assimilation of their ideas by the rest of the Ukrainian Canadian community or wider Canadian audience.<sup>223</sup> But, to my mind, even if only four memoirs have been identified so far, it would be safe to conclude that Ostarbeiters' memoirs are an inefficient or, to put it into other words, insubstantial source for collective memory creation about forced labourers.

That conclusion becomes especially evident in comparison with the production of memoirs by Ukrainian political refugees, part of the same Ukrainian DPs' wave to Canada. According to bibliographical guide covering annotated entries of publications about/by

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<sup>222</sup> Juanjo Igartua, and Dario Paez, *Art and Remembering Traumatic Collective Events: The Case of the Spanish Civil War*, 88.

<sup>223</sup> Nicholas Szostaczuk's memoirs *Vid Temriavy Do Svitla: Spomyny* were published only in Ukrainian that narrows its readership. Others memoirs are available in English.



postwar Ukrainian political parties from the 1940s to 1984, there are 159 entries for works published in Canada by political refugees during that period.<sup>224</sup> Of course, this bibliography, as is recognized by the editors, is not comprehensive and is limited to 1984. Nevertheless, it shows that political refugees, in comparison to the former Ostarbeiters, were very active in writing and publishing their works. Most of their publications are related to Ukrainian independence issues, Ukrainian history, struggles against communism, and the history of different political organizations and their leaders. Among those publications, I identified 30 memoirs regarding pre-war and war experiences of the Ukrainian political refugees. Again, these memoirs had been published prior to 1984. By now, that number might be significantly larger. In comparison to these numbers, 4 memoirs of the former Ostarbeiters, which I have been able to identify so far, are definitely an insignificant minority. It seems doubtful that they can pretend to be a significant source of collective memory about Ostarbeiters.

All in all, the scarce number of Ostarbeiters' memoirs is quite telling. It may be caused by the lack of other people's interest in their memories about the war and by the general absence of public discourse about forced labour. In these circumstances, former Ostarbeiters have not been inspired to self-analyse their forced labour experience and interpret its meaning in their individual lives and in the grand history. As a result, they perceived their forced labour experience as unimportant and unworthy of the attention of others.

#### **3.2.4. Institutions**

Since formal organizations and groups usually have greater access to the public arena and possess more resources to propagate their versions of past events than separate individuals do, it is important to determine if any organizations were founded by the former forced workers in Canada. Presumably, such organizations might have had resources (including positional and financial) through which the narratives about Ostarbeiters could be promoted, created, and disseminated into the public arena (academic and popular publications, media, schools, museums, and other spheres).

Having searched secondary literature about DPs' organizational activity in general and several online databases with information about Ukrainian organizations in Canada, I did

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<sup>224</sup> Roman Petryshyn and Natalia Chomiak, *Political Writings of Post-World War Two Ukrainian Émigrés: Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Research* (Edmonton, Alta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1984).

not find a single organization formed by the former Ostarbeiters in Canada.<sup>225</sup> That fact prompts me to think that former forced workers either did not have an opportunity or the necessity to create any organization that would have integrated Ukrainians on the basis of their common experience in forced labour for the Nazis.

In contrast to the former Ostarbeiters, organizational activity of other DPs, namely political refugees, was radically different. Within ten years of their arrival to Canada, they created numerous ethnic organizations, newspapers, affiliated youth groups, church parishes, and community halls across Canada.<sup>226</sup> Among the main ones were the following: the Canadian League for the Liberation of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada, schools at the elementary and secondary levels, the Mikhnovsky Ukrainian Student Association, some commercial enterprises, the Ukrainian National Federation, the Ukrainian War Veterans' Associations, the Ukrainian Women's Organizations of Olha Basarab, the Ukrainian National Youth Federation, the Ukrainian Credit Union, the Ukrainian Academic Society Zarevo, the Association of Ukrainian Victims of Russian Communist Terror, weekly newspapers *Homin Ukrainy* (Ukrainian Echo) and *Novyi Shliakh* (New Pathway).<sup>227</sup> Numerous other affiliated organizations and revived institutions are not included in this list. The activities of those organized Ukrainian refugees played an important role in political socialization of the Ukrainian Canadian youth and the establishment of a more aggressive anti-Soviet political agenda.<sup>228</sup>

Naturally, those organizations were substantial means by which collective memory about political refugees was created and disseminated in the Ukrainian-Canadian context. Most likely, the narrative about Ostarbeiters did not get currency in the public arena because this group did not have necessary positional and other resources, similar to those that political refugees had, to promote the collective memory about themselves. Neither was this process initiated by others, non-members of the forced workers group.

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<sup>225</sup> BRAMA, Gateway Ukraine, "Directory of Ukrainian Organizations in the Diaspora", <http://www.brama.com/diaspora/region.html>. InfoUkes, An Information Resource about Ukraine and Ukrainians, "Ukrainian Media and Organizations," <http://www.infoukes.com/organizations/>. Ukrainian Canadian Congress, "National Members (Ukrainian Organizations)," <http://www.ucc.ca/members/national-members/>. Ukrainians.Ca. "Ukrainian organizations Abroad," <http://www.ukrainians.ca/guide/organizations-abroad.html>. Volodymyr Kysilevsky, "Social and Political Life," in *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopaedia*, ed. Volodymyr Kubijovych (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963-1967), 1168-1171.

<sup>226</sup> Luciuk, *Unintended Consequences in Refugee Resettlement*, 478.

<sup>227</sup> Stebelsky, *The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War*, 148-149. See also: Olha Woycenko, "Community Organizations," in *A Heritage In Transition: Essays In The History Of Ukrainians In Canada*, ed. Manoly Lypul (Toronto, Ont: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 186-193.

<sup>228</sup> Stebelsky, *The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War*, "149, 154.

### 3.2.5. *Ostarbeiters' social and political activity*

In contrast to political activists, the former Ostarbeiters were reluctant to establish their own specific organizations. However, many of them joined existing Ukrainian agencies. According to available interviews with former forced workers, most of them were active members of Ukrainian church parishes. Some informants indicated that they participated in the activities of such organizations as the League of Ukrainian Canadian Women and the Ukrainian Canadian Social Service.<sup>229</sup> Those organizations served as cultural and social centers which supported charitable activities and social assistance for Ukrainians.

Besides that, several informants mentioned that they were active in organizations founded by political refugees. Not only former Ostarbeiters, but also their children participated in the activities of PLAST.<sup>230</sup> PLAST, or the Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada, was formed by political refugees, specifically the Bandera faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist. It maintained a high political profile and provided advanced education and socialization activities for young Ukrainian Canadians.<sup>231</sup> Olga Sukhovyj remarked that she always read the newspaper *Homin Ukrainy* (Ukrainian Echo), a weekly newspaper of Bandera faction. Several informants were members of the Ukrainian Youth Association of Canada and the League for the Liberation of Ukraine, also affiliated with Bandera faction.<sup>232</sup> Olha Maksymiuk was even a member of the Ukrainian Revolutionary Democratic Party.<sup>233</sup>

Of course, if only 7 informants out of 31 mentioned that they had participated in activities of political organizations, their testimony is not a weighty argument for concluding that former Ostarbeiters were politically active members of the Ukrainian DPs community to the extent that political refugees were. Such a conclusion is even less reasonable, given that 4 women of those 7 informants were married to members of Ukrainian nationalist

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<sup>229</sup> Raisa Machula, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 17, 2001. (UCRDC Archive). Lesia Kachka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 21, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anna Stetsyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Maria Kubrak, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>230</sup> Helen Junyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011. Raisa Machula, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 17, 2001. (UCRDC Archive). Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>231</sup> Stebelsky, *The Resettlement of Ukrainian Refugees after the Second World War*, 149-150.

<sup>232</sup> Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Maria Kubrak, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Maria Dziuba, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>233</sup> Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

organizations.<sup>234</sup> Thus, it is safe to assume that while their husbands were initially politically active, those women became involved in such activities under their influence.

Taking everything into consideration, the analysis of available interviews and search for possible tools of collective memory creation about Ostarbeiters do not permit the extension of the term “political refugees”, which the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography has typically applied to all Ukrainian DPs, to the former forced labourers. On the contrary, Ostarbeiters rarely joined political organizations and were unenthusiastic about creating their own organizations in Canada. As mentioned in Chapter II, with their limited education, former Ostarbeiters worked all their lives as “blue-collar” workers. At the same time, political refugees generally had higher education; among them were professionals, writers, journalists, clergy, artists, teachers, and professors. So, it is not surprising that politically active members of DPs, not Ostarbeiters, were more disposed to social and political activism because of their educational background, professional occupations, convictions, social ties, and human and institutional sources. Consequently, they presented their ideologies and collective memory in public discourse, in contrast to the former Ostarbeiters who did not.

In addition, as mentioned in Chapter II, former Ostarbeiters refused to return home either because they feared the treatment they would receive from the Soviet authorities for their work for the Nazis or because they would face the same, if not worse, conditions in their Soviet-dominated home as they had experienced before the war (poverty, compulsion to work at the collective farms, and others). None of the informants revealed any sort of political reason for migration, such as the desire to struggle against communism or to defend Ukrainian independence-related issues abroad.

It is also relevant to mention here that I detected one interesting resonance across different interviews with Ostarbeiters: most of them did not associate themselves with such a group as “Displaced Persons” and did not identify themselves as such. Judging from the choice of language, it seemed that the term “Displaced Persons” was simply absent from their vocabulary. Out of 32 available interviews, only four informants mentioned names of such DP-related organizations as UNRRA and IRO.<sup>235</sup> And only two informants used the term

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<sup>234</sup> Helen Junyk, interviewed by Maria Melnychuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011. Olga Sukhovyj, interviewed by Maria Melnychuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011. Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>235</sup> Olena Ivasyshyn, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Zina Semeniuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 1, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Maria

“Displaced Persons” at all.<sup>236</sup> Most importantly, they did not even refer to themselves as “Ostarbeiters.”

Interestingly enough, with only two exceptions, former Ostarbeiters did not mention political refugees among those who stayed at the DP camps with them.<sup>237</sup> Some informants recalled that different social and cultural activities at the DP camps were organized, such as Ukrainian churches, schools, choirs, theatre, dance and sport groups.<sup>238</sup> However, nothing in regard to political activities was mentioned by anyone. Informants indicated that there were “some organizations” at the camps, but nothing related to political issues was named. Thus, I am inclined to conclude that informants were not interested in political activities when they were staying at DP camps. In regard to the leaders of political organizations, nothing was mentioned. Those observations additionally challenge the established conception in the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography that the DP-camp experience transformed all DPs “from a rather heterogeneous mass into something of a schooled cohort, united in its world-view, under the most complete control of the militant nationalists active among them.”<sup>239</sup>

Canadian political scientist Gerald Dirks distinguishes two types of refugees: political refugees and non-activists. The *political refugee* struggles to continue pursuing his/her political goals in the new country and “rejects assimilation or integration pressures in the state of asylum in favour of maintaining a lively interest in the conditions that continue to prevail in his state of origin.”<sup>240</sup> A *non-activist refugee* “desires to abandon his former homeland and, like an economic migrant, begins life anew in the adopted state... has no interest in any participatory schemes that are propounded by the activists to bring about change in the homeland.”<sup>241</sup> As follows from the above observations, former Ostarbeiters did

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Kubrak, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Montreal, QB. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

<sup>236</sup> Dmytro Bodnar, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>237</sup> Names of some political and cultural organizations and their leaders were mentioned only by: Olha Maksymiuk (Interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive)) and Petro Struk (Interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive)).

<sup>238</sup> Olha Kotsur, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Raisa Machula, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 17, 2001. (UCRDC Archive). Lesia Kachka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 21, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Zina Semeniuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 1, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Ivan Korets, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 28, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>239</sup> Luciuk, *Searching for Place*, 214.

<sup>240</sup> Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism*, 6.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

not reveal political reasons for immigration to Canada, and most of them did not participate in the political activities promoted by political refugees either at the DP camps or after immigration to Canada. They even did not identify themselves with the DP group. Therefore, from my perspective, applying Gerald Dirks' classification of refugees to the Ukrainian DPs in Canada, it is more reasonable to assign the former Ostarbeiters to the category of "non-activist" Displaced Persons than to include them in the category "political refugees."

## Chapter IV

### Ostarbeiters' Individual Memories

In the previous chapter I came to the conclusion that collective memory about Ostarbeiters has not been elaborated in the Ukrainian-Canadian public discourse. Now it is time to examine the way former forced workers present their life experiences by themselves. Thus, their individual memories are a focus of my interest in this chapter. Toward this end, I describe the method of conducting interviews and dwell on the methodology of interview analysis. Afterward, the analysis of interviews with former Ostarbeiters is presented.

#### 4.1. Method of conducting interviews

The method of biographical-narrative interview, used for conducting interviews for this research, was initially formulated in the 1970s by German sociologist Fritz Schütze and was further developed by another German sociologist, Gabriele Rosenthal.<sup>242</sup>

The first period of interview, induced by an open-ended question, anticipates the narrator's biographical self-representation. It is not interrupted by the interviewer and only encouraged by eye contact and other gestures of attention. The next period is divided in two stages: initial questions are related to what has been already mentioned by the narrator, and only afterwards specific points of researcher's interest that have not been discussed yet are addressed. This type of interview provides a researcher with an opportunity to investigate how the informant constructs his/her life stories.<sup>243</sup>

I began my interviews with several minutes of casual conversation whereby I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my project. Respondents were asked to present their life stories in their own words, organizing the stories in whatever way they deemed appropriate. Although it was necessary to justify my interest in the interviews by referring to war experience, it was also crucial to hear respondents' entire life stories in order to understand the meaning of separate events in the light of each other. Thus, I set up the voice recorder and stated my request for an interview in the following form:

I am very interested in your life experience. Although my project is focused on your war experience, I am eager to know about your whole life. Your life experience is very important

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<sup>242</sup> Gabriele Rosenthal, *Biographical Research*, 48-64. For the Questionnaire I employed in my oral history fieldwork see Appendix 4.

<sup>243</sup> Rosenthal, *Biographical Research*, 52.

for us, young generation, who lives in completely different life circumstances. So, if you do not mind, begin with you childhood, please.<sup>244</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter II, I used 26 interviews with former Ostarbeiters from the Toronto-based Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC). They were conducted in 1998-2001 and were similar to interviews conducted by me, as they were biographical interviews, which started with a request to describe the informants' whole life experiences, beginning from childhood.<sup>245</sup> Although interviewers focused on the same thematic field and used the same type of questions I applied to my interviews, they did not strictly follow the rules of biographical-narrative interview and were instead based on guided conversation. The purpose of such interviews is to derive interpretations from respondents' talk and establish common patterns or themes that are present in all narrators' stories.<sup>246</sup> In other words, as opposed to my interviews, UCRDC interviews were characterized by more intensive researcher interference in the flow of narratives.

#### **4.2. Methodology of interview analysis**

In analysis of the interviews, two methodologies were used: the elements of narrative analysis developed by American sociologist Catherine Riessman and the method of biographical case reconstruction offered by German sociologist Gabriele Rosenthal, a well known scholar in the field of interpretive methods and biographical research.

Since narrative analysis takes the recalled story as an object of investigation, it is relevant to define the concept of *personal narrative* and determine the strategy for its analysis. For my research, the approach of Catherine Riessman was adopted. This approach defines the narrative as temporally and spatially structured story, in which the narrator creates plots from what appears to be disordered experience. Because stories in the interview are

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<sup>244</sup> Of course, such a request imposed a chronological order on the narrative and might have interfered with the sequence of association in recalling the past. But, at the same time, it was important to frame my request in such a way since interviewees had a chance to recall the whole life experience, not only the war-time as many of them initially understood.

<sup>245</sup> For conducting interviews with my own informants, I mainly followed the questions which were used by the researchers from the UCRDC regarding informants' pre-war and war experiences. That allowed me to compare answers to the same questions and to reveal common sense of informants' reflectivity. Apart from that, I asked more specific questions about respondents' post-war life in Canada since the purpose of my research was to reconstruct those experiences.

<sup>246</sup> Carol Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, eds. Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002), 83.



rarely bounded clearly, the researcher's interpretative task is to define the segments of narrative according to his/her research questions.<sup>247</sup>

To be more precise, in my research I employ the concept of personal narrative, signifying the whole life story relayed by the informant during the interview, including the dialogic exchange with the interviewer. Narrative consists of different specific stories organized into plots with distinct characters and settings.

Catherine Riessman considers narrative presentation as the performance of a narrator's identity. In the situation of interview, an informant negotiates and accomplishes his/her identity through a positioning of the self in personal narrative. Thus, Catherine Riessman's analytic strategy consists of analyzing the way narrators present themselves through their stories. To this end, a research examines the following features in the narrative: choice of language and grammatical resources; shifts from one scene to the other; the degree of elaboration of each scene; selection of events and manner of assembly; position of characters by the narrators; and the particular moral points and interpretations that are made clear to the listeners.<sup>248</sup>

My analysis of the Ostarbeiters' interviews also utilizes Gabriele Rosenthal's method of *biographical case reconstruction*.<sup>249</sup> The main foundation here is the distinction between *life story* (the narrated personal life during an interview) and *life history* (the actual lived-through life). Or put differently: this method implies investigation of the difference between the narrated life story and experienced life history.<sup>250</sup> Such an analysis allows the researcher to explore what kinds of events a narrator includes in, or omits from, his/her life story.

Another underlying assumption of this method is that life story does not consist of randomly chosen disconnected events. Rather, a narrator connects and relates different events in a coherent, meaningful context according to the overall interpretation of his/her autobiography. Such a selection of events does not necessarily follow the linear sequence of time. Therefore, through the construction of a life story, analysis of thematic and temporal links between various experiences, and the narrator's interpretation of the events, we can

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<sup>247</sup> Riessman, *Analysis Of Personal Narratives*, 698-699.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 701-704.

<sup>249</sup> Rosenthal, *Biographical Research*, 48-64; Gabriele Rosenthal, "Reconstruction of Life Stories: Principles of Selection in Generating Stories for Narrative Biographical Interviews," in *The Narrative Study of Lives*, eds. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (Newbury Park: Sage, 1993), 1: 59-91.

<sup>250</sup> Rosenthal, *Biographical Research*, 49.

determine which aspects of a narrator's experience are presented as relevant and which as insignificant.<sup>251</sup>

A separate remark should be made regarding the analysis of the UCRDC interviews. As previously mentioned, the interviewers frequently interfered in the narrators' stories. In some cases, the natural flow of narratives were interrupted and perhaps even changed. Such cases require more careful reading of the interview transcripts in order to determine the extent to which the interviewers' questions shaped the narratives. However, those interviews are still suitable for the narrative analysis. As Catherine Riessman asserts, narrative is a joint production of the interviewer and the respondent. Thus, the way the researcher elicits and shapes the interview should be also included in the excerpts of narratives.<sup>252</sup> In regard to those interviews, I focused on the emergence in the interviews of "thick descriptions" produced by an interviewee – elaborate and detailed answers to interviewer's questions from which meaningful patterns can be discerned. Verbal accounts of life experience and the biographical perspective which frame an interview require a narrator to select, order, relate, and describe events, enclosing them in structured stories. Making meaning is here a central stage in the interpretive process.<sup>253</sup> In addition, the UCRDC interviews have a common set of questions for all interviews that facilitated a reasonable and valid comparison between informants.

Before turning to the particular analysis of Ostarbeiters' interviews, some consideration should be given to the issues in interpretation of oral history interviews. Italian scholar Alessandro Portelli, one of the most influential oral historians, argues that the challenge of oral history lies in its dialogic discourse. That discourse is "created not only by what the interviewees say, but also by what we as historians do – by the historian's presence in the field, and by the historian's presentation of the material."<sup>254</sup> It is the historian who initiates an interview and shapes its form by defining the chronological order and the relevant themes.<sup>255</sup> Reflecting on the same issue, Ronald Grele, another leading oral historian, insists that, due to the relationship of interviewer and interviewee, an interview can only be

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<sup>251</sup> Rosenthal, *Reconstruction of Life Stories*, 63-64.

<sup>252</sup> Riessman, *Analysis of Personal Narratives*, 698-699.

<sup>253</sup> Warren, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 87, 97.

<sup>254</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "Oral History As Genre," in *Narrative and Genre*, eds. Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (London: Routledge, 1998), 23.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 28.

described as a conversation narrative which embraces the perspectives both of those participants.<sup>256</sup>

Concurring with these ideas, I admit that my interpretation of Ostarbeiters' interviews is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. Since oral historians try to make connection between interviews and larger cultural formations, historians' interpretation may differ from the original narrators' implications and might be legitimately challenged by interviewees.<sup>257</sup> I am not suggesting that differences in these perspectives must be somehow overcome. Rather, I want to stress that my interpretation of the Ostarbeiters' interviews should be read in the following way: as embedded in the context of my scholarly environment, knowledge, and experience, contributing to a wide range of meaning and possible multiple interpretations. Informants remember. I interpreted their memories. These are two different endeavours.

### **4.3. Ostarbeiters' individual memories: interpreting interviews**

By using narrative accounts of similar life experiences, interviews with former Ostarbeiters provide the researcher with an opportunity to investigate they make sense of their past. From this perspective, I am particularly interested in an examination of three main themes. Firstly, I the structure of the Ostarbeiters' narratives organization is studied. Secondly, the goal is to recognize how the narrators present themselves in their stories and what identities they construct in their stories. And, finally, certain elaborations are given about Ostarbeiters' story-sharing as a social activity.

Working with the transcripts of 32 oral history interviews with former forced labourers, the central aim of my analysis is to distinguish how the forced labour experience is introduced and interpreted by former Ostarbeiters in the overall presentation of their life stories.

#### **4.3.1. The narratives organization**

Four main topics, or specific stories with distinct plots and settings, can be distinguished within Ostarbeiters' narratives: pre-war life in Ukraine, forced labour in Germany, post-war experience (which includes stories about Soviet repatriation, residence in DP camps, and immigration to other European countries in search of employment), and,

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<sup>256</sup> Ronald Grele, "Movement Without Aim: Methodological And Theoretical Problems In Oral History," in *Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 44-45.

<sup>257</sup> Katherine Borland, "'That's not what I said': Interpretive conflict in oral narrative research," in *Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 321.

finally, resettlement to Canada. Although each theme receives various degrees of an informant's attention, comparative examination of narratives allows me to distinguish common tendencies in the thematic organization across different narratives.

For the vast majority of those informants who were born in Central or Eastern Ukraine<sup>258</sup>, the first dominant theme in respondents' narratives was pre-war life, including reference points such as Soviet forced collectivization, dispossession of the kulaks (wealthier peasants), and Stalin's purges. Many informants also described how their families survived through the Soviet-induced famine of 1932-1933. Usually, those stories were elaborated and emotionally charged, which suggested specific biographical relevance of those events.

For the residents of Western Ukraine, who encountered the Soviet authorities in 1939-1941, stories about pre-war time were given less attention. At the same time, if experience of the Soviet occupation was painful, respondents provided emotional and elaborate stories, since that was often one of the main factors preventing them from returning to Soviet-dominated Western Ukraine after the war.

In regard to the next major theme, viz. forced labour experience, I was surprised to discover that many informants rarely discussed that period in depth on their own initiative, and only additional questions from the interviewer helped to develop and specify those stories. Lacking self-directed elaboration, many narratives about the war-time period became compressed into a few short paragraphs. For example, Anna Maryn's story about her Ostarbeiter experience was reduced to the following:

Then came the year 1942. It was the war already. And we were taken to Germany. My brother was taken to Germany earlier, because he was a man. And then me. So I'm going to Germany. We arrive, and I happened to be given to one landlord. He was quite a big landlord. There was one hireling, me, and another hired labourer. There were two of them. But it is true that they fed me at first, and then when it came to supper they told me to sit at the table with them. And I was sitting with them at that table all those years, whether it was dinner, breakfast, lunch, or whatever. But it is also true that they did not caress us. Because we had to work hard. Very hard. But at least they were humane to us, at least we were not in distress. Then, while I was there, the war was over.<sup>259</sup>

Even more condensed story was presented by Olga Sukhovyj:

When the Germans took me, when I was taken, I was in Dahau first. I was in Dahau for almost half a year. And then I worked for a Gestapo man. There were 7 children. He was Dutch. But he was a German Dutch. He did not admit that he was Dutch. He was SS. It was very difficult for me there, I went to bed at 1 a.m. and got up at 7 a.m. It was hard. I

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<sup>258</sup> Those parts of Ukraine were annexed to the Soviet Union in 1922.

<sup>259</sup> Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

was a child. Who was I? I was a 15-year-old child. I had a hard life. I stayed there till the war was over.<sup>260</sup>

However, as interviews showed, more details and stories emerged if an Ostarbeiter had encountered severe treatment at his/her work. Then the narrator tended to recall incidents of abuse, starvation, and cruelty from their masters. But again, those stories were not always united in a coherent way. Interestingly enough, informants did not attempt to indicate that harsh treatment from certain people was something peculiar to all Germans. In other words, those stories were deprived of negative moral evaluations of Germans as being all “bad” or “cruel”, unlike the evaluations of “the Soviets” in the previous stories. “The Soviets” were commonly generalized as “Russians” or “Bolsheviks” who treated the informants, their families, and other Ukrainians ruthlessly, and no Soviet characters were presented individually and positively. Contrary to that, while some Germans were “bad”, informants usually balanced that with stories about “good” and “sympathetic” Germans. In some cases, informants even tried to justify Germans, which never happened in regard to the Soviet authorities. For example, Emilia Svitalska recalled how she and another 24 girls were taken to a penalty camp, where they suffered from hunger, cold, and beatings. However, she explained that it was their own fault, since they broke the rule of the camp order. She continued: “They judge, I do not like it. If you were beaten – it was your fault. I do not like those people.”<sup>261</sup> Anna Stetsyk had a similar opinion: “If you were quiet, did not touch them, did whatever you were told to do – then they did not say anything [against you].”<sup>262</sup>

Nevertheless, it was noticeable in some interviews that informants still referred to certain public images of war experiences as something necessarily severe and violent, though their own experience might be different. For instance, when an informant could not recall incidents of harsh treatment from his/her own experience, he/she tried to refer to the experience of others, who did endure that. It seemed that those stories about others helped informants to adjust their stories to that public image and/or supplement them with something “more common” or “more known”.

For example, Petro Struk, who lived and worked in moderate conditions, recalled:

But I’d heard, although I did not meet them, those who worked in the industry, especially in the military industry, they were strictly behind the barbed wire, they were taken to work by escort and also taken away from work. They had poor food, so they had to steal from the kitchen whatever they could. I even heard, as one woman described – I read it

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<sup>260</sup> Olga Sukhovyj, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011.

<sup>261</sup> Emilia Svitalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>262</sup> Anna Stetsyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

somewhere – that they stole herring heads and ate them, sucked them in order to quench their hunger. So, those were true slaves. But I did not meet them myself.<sup>263</sup>

At the same time, other informants implicitly referred to that public image trying to deny it. For example: “I cannot reproach them [Germans]. It would be a sin. I ate with them, we ate together. I do not know why she [hostess] liked me. I cannot say anything against Germans, I cannot [lie] that something [bad] happened, it would be a sin.”<sup>264</sup> Or: “I shall not lie, but it wasn’t that tough for me in Germany.”<sup>265</sup>

It is also interesting that some informants referred to their young years as an important factor which helped them to endure war-time hardship. For example, Olena Ivasyshun mentioned that forced workers found time to get together and sing and dance since “young people are always young people.”<sup>266</sup> Anelia Varvaruk recalled with a humour how they were hungry and stole some food from the camp kitchen, made chalk drawings around the whole camp, and threatened a cruel overseer with a dead body. As she summarized, it was hard to live but “young people had their own rights” and tried to entertain themselves.<sup>267</sup> A similar mode of storytelling was presented by Yelena Shaleva: she was laughing while recalling some stories about the hard conditions of work and life in Germany. An explanation might be that in addition to the factor of young age of the narrator, the passage of time might have softened the emotional impact of those events. Thus, from the vantage point of present realities and passage of time, these horrible events might lose their emotional burden.

One can also suppose that while recalling past events people may utilize coping mechanisms which help them somehow withstand emotional pressure of traumatic events. Being involved in a research project that dealt with interviewing Holocaust survivors, American oral historian Mark Klemper emphasizes that people who have experienced severe trauma may maintain apparent composure during the interview and employ certain defence mechanisms that might make their responses sound strange. Narrators may tend to recall their experiences without emotion in order to protect themselves from attacks of the images of trauma. One of the strong coping mechanisms is laughter as an attempt for the narrator to keep himself/herself at a distance from self-pity. If the coping mechanisms are not strong

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<sup>263</sup> Petro Struk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>264</sup> Shumelda, Olga, interviewed by Iroida Wynnickyj. Toronto, ON. November 11, 2003 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>265</sup> Dmytro Bodnar, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>266</sup> Olena Ivasyshyn, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>267</sup> Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

enough, the narrator's vulnerability and emotions will be seen on the surface.<sup>268</sup> I am inclined to think that this was not the case in the interviews with the Ostarbeiters regarding their war-time experiences. I did not notice either extreme pathos in their stories or attempts to attain closure regarding their experiences as forced labourers. Thus, I consider that war-time events were not presented as traumatic by most of the narrators. However, it is still a question, why the stories about pre-war encounters with the Soviet authorities did not lose their emotional impact. This intriguing question will be returned to at the end of my analysis of Ostarbeiters' memories.

After describing their war experiences, informants usually turned to the third main theme in their interviews – immediate post-war experiences. That theme consisted of such topics as escaping Soviet repatriation, residence in the DP camps, and searching for jobs in different European countries.

In most interviews, the salient of events changed significantly, when it came to the topics relating to the Soviet repatriation campaign. Here, in contrast to the stories about forced labour experience, the stories were considerably more elaborate. In many interviews, the narrators tended to describe their encounters with the Soviet officials after the war in a similarly emotional way as they did that regarding their pre-war experiences.

The period of staying in the DP camps was usually presented as a pleasant time by virtue of different social and cultural activities, a Ukrainian environment, and entertainment; especially concerning those without family responsibilities. In this respect, an interview with Halyna Yunyk provides a very good example. She was ten-year-old at the end of the war and explained that the time at the DP camp was the happiest in her life, since she had many friends and entertainment. Although it was sometimes difficult to get enough food, she was not troubled: "I did not worry about that in my ten years. Likely, my parents had different views. But as for my age, everything was fine."<sup>269</sup> While for some other informants the DP camp life was not so pleasant, with the lack of everyday necessities, fears of repatriation, and the uncertainty of the future.

In general, it is significant that the immediate post-war period was presented as highly important in the overall biographical interpretations. For many informants, in this relatively short time span, they started their family lives, gave birth to their first children, decided to change their lives by avoiding repatriation, and settled permanently in Canada.

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<sup>268</sup> Mark Klemper, "Navigating Live Review: Interviews With Survivors of Trauma," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 202-203.

<sup>269</sup> Helen Yunyk, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011.

In contrast to all three previous themes, stories about life in Canada remained the least elaborate. Respondents were inclined to finish their narratives at this point. They perceived this period as the least worthy of attention in the interviews. When they finally settled themselves and nothing challenging usually happened, there was just simply “nothing to talk about”, from their point of view. For example, Petro Struk finished his narrative in the following way:

“And we settled in Toronto. We lived in Toronto. We found a place in Toronto. We were given a job right away. And it was the end of our rambling.”<sup>270</sup>

Thus, I assume that those memories about life in Canada, except the initial years of adjustment to new life, do not play a significant function in the organization of the former Ostarbeiters’ personal identities and are not of special biographical meaning.

After this general observation of the narrative structure that defined the interviews with former Ostarbeiters, it is important remark on the specific place of forced labour experience in those narratives.

As my experience in conducting interviews with former Ostarbeiters in Ukraine proved, the war time in Germany was usually presented as the most striking life experience for the informants.<sup>271</sup> Consequently, I assumed that former Ostarbeiters in Canada would relate forced labour experience in a similar way. I also supposed that since the war experience was remote in time, former Ostarbeiters must have developed elaborate narratives about this experience and evaluated the influence of forced labour on the rest of their lives. However, such suppositions were not confirmed after analysis of the Canadian interviews. On the contrary, overall examination of Ostarbeiters’ narratives suggests that informants tended to recall their forced labour experience without interpreting it in the light of their general life experiences. In the end, I was able to detect only one such interpretation. It was presented by Olha Maksymiuk:

In fact, we lost our youth and we lost our school. We could have studied, we could have enjoyed our youth, but we lost it instead in Germany. We lost it. We didn’t have a youth at all.<sup>272</sup>

It is also interesting to observe whether informants referred to public events as important time markers in their narratives. Usually, such attempts help narrators to place their experience in a range of important historical events and, in such a way, signify historical

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<sup>270</sup> Petro Struk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>271</sup> Mariia Melenchuk, “Polityka Pamiati Shchodo Ostarbaiteriv V Radianskomu Soiuzi (1942-1991)” (Bachelor’s Thesis, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 2009).

<sup>272</sup> Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).



relevance of their individual experience. However, among the 32 narrators whose stories are being considered here, former Ostarbeiters rarely brought their individual war experiences into the public sphere. The only one such a historical marker was the capitulation of Nazi Germany which meant the end of forced labour experience for Ostarbeiters. Only five informants referred in their stories to such important historical markers as agreement between Stalin and Roosevelt, Hitler's "Mein Kampf", Yalta agreements, names of some Polish generals, or Ukrainian political parties and leaders.<sup>273</sup>

In general, investigating the difference between the events Ostarbeiters actually experienced, on the one hand, and their narrated stories, on the other, while considering the emotional loading and moral evaluations, I discovered that, for many informants their encounters with the Soviet authorities (either before the war or during the repatriation period) were presented as the most significant part of their whole life experience.

In addition, recalling their post-war life in Canada, many informants referred again to stories about "the Soviets". The most vivid example is the interview with Anelia Varvaruk. She built her narrative around the following topics: Soviet occupation in 1939-1941, departure to Germany, and circumstances of her life and work there, her escape from the Soviet repatriation missions, and her resettlement to Canada. She ended her narrative in the following way:

We had been in Canada for 5 years probably. Very often I was dreaming that I went to Ukraine, but there were those uniforms which were striking, of which I was very scared. I was frightened, I was in such a fear. I woke up all wet. Then I looked around: I am in Canada, thank God I'm in Canada. You know, I was so afraid of their round caps. I am afraid of policemen... If I only see an NKVD agent before me with that star on his head – that's it for me. I am so afraid of the police, I am dying of fear. I have never dealt with police in Canada, but I am still afraid. It's just a result of those round ups during 1940-1941. There was much crying and everything. And that has remained [in my memory].

Similarly, another informant, Halyna Kudla, at the end of the interview returned to her recollections from the period of Soviet occupation in 1939-1940 describing the cruel treatment by "the Soviets" in regard to her family.<sup>274</sup>

Many Ostarbeiters indicated that they had corresponded with their friends or families in Ukraine. The main component of such recollections was the disapproval of "the Soviets".

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<sup>273</sup> Emiliia Svitalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Dmytro Bodnar, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Petro Struk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>274</sup> Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

Informants focused on the following topics: harsh treatment of Soviet authorities toward the returning forced labourers; inability to conduct correspondence with relatives abroad; prohibition to visit rural areas in the Soviet Ukraine beginning in the 1960s. They also mentioned poor living conditions and dominance of the Russian language in Ukraine.

In comparison to that, stories concerning Germans and the war period were less elaborate, less emotionally laden, and rarely mentioned during the interviews. Of course, I do not imply that Soviet-related topics determined the importance of all narrators' experiences. However, I would argue that this was valid at least for half of all informants. This is a significant proportion if we take into consideration the following: no other episodes from the narrators' experiences, including the forced labour period, were presented with such a distinct significance across the available interviews as the stories about "the Soviets" were.<sup>275</sup>

#### **4.3.2. *The narrators' identities***

Since oral history interviewing is regarded as a performance of identity, it is interesting to observe what identities former Ostarbeiters performed during their interviews. In particular, I am interested in learning whether the informants were inclined to present and emphasize their identities as forced workers and collectivize their experiences.

In their personal stories, informants use particular linguistic resources for positioning themselves and, in such a way, for performing of their identities. Verbs, for example, frame narrator's actions as autonomous or compulsory.<sup>276</sup> As seen from the Ostarbeiters' interviews, former forced labourers tended to use either passive or active verb forms, and, in this way, positioned themselves as active or passive participants of the events. Interestingly enough, this use of the verb form could be distinguished clearly across different themes in the interviews.

Most informants used the "passive" voice while describing their pre-war encounters with "the Soviets". For example, speaking about forced collectivization: "they took away

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<sup>275</sup> I recognize that the fact that I was an interviewer from Ukraine (the former Soviet republic) might influence the selections of stories and moral evaluations presented by the informants in their interviews. The same is applicable to the interviews conducted by Ukrainian researcher Tatiana Lapan for the UCRDC. The respondents might find it relevant to recall stories that were familiar for us as for researchers from the region, namely the stories from the Soviet history. In other words, they might suppose that those soviet-related stories were more interested for the researchers from the former USSR. Perhaps, the informants would have told more detailed stories about their war experiences in Germany or post-war experiences in Canada had the scholars from Germany or Canada interviewed them. It was also possible that the interviewees might feel the need to "justify" their migration to Canada and not returning home to Ukraine before Ukrainian researchers, their compatriots. It might enforce the tendency of blaming "the Soviets" during the interviews.

<sup>276</sup> Riessman, *Analysis of Personal Narratives*, 702.

everything... They sold our house... we were destroyed”<sup>277</sup>, “we were turned out of our house... they came and took away everything... we had to be expelled from our village.”<sup>278</sup> In such a way, they presented themselves as victims of the Soviet policy.

Usually, informants also used “passive” voice for describing how they were deported to Germany: “the Germans took me for work,”<sup>279</sup> “we were driven to the station... we were put on the train,”<sup>280</sup> “we were bathed and our hair was cut. We were like cattle.”<sup>281</sup> However, while recalling their life and work in Germany, passive positioning of themselves was not so clear. Some informants further kept to those passive forms and gave other characters power over themselves. But many others turned to “active” grammar and did not try to position themselves as victims of the Nazi policy toward the forced workers.<sup>282</sup>

The next clear shift in self-positioning, namely the turn to active roles in many interviews was obvious when Ostarbeiters talked about their post-war life and settlement in Canada. In the context of these discussions, they presented themselves as those who assumed control over the events and purposefully initiated actions (fled from Russians, migrated to other countries, settled in Canada, found jobs and apartments, got married, and took care of their children). Here active verbs framed the narrators’ intentional actions: “They started to organize Displaced Person camps... and I left my proprietress and went...then I moved to the American zone. I went to a Polish camp,”<sup>283</sup> “We went to camp...later we escaped [because of forced repatriation], I returned to my proprietor to work, Yurii [husband] went to his. I worked half a year. Then we went to the camp again,”<sup>284</sup> “I found my job... then I found her [wife], we got married... We bought our own house.”<sup>285</sup>

Some differences in identity presentations may be noticed across the gender line. Among the available interviews for my research, 8 were recorded from men and 24 from women. In the field of gender studies, it is recognized that men usually tend to signify masculinity in their interviews and present themselves as autonomous in their thoughts and

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<sup>277</sup> Anna Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

<sup>278</sup> Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>279</sup> Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>280</sup> Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>281</sup> Kateryna Oliinyk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 26, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>282</sup> Since all interviews used for the analysis were conducted in Ukrainian and the citations were translated into English, one may also argue that there might be different sociolinguistic preferences in those languages regarding using active/passive grammar.

<sup>283</sup> Olha Kotsur, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. December 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>284</sup> Halyna Dorosh, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 22, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>285</sup> Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

actions, inclined to risk.<sup>286</sup> In my own research, this held true for some of the available interviews, in those areas that concerned war and post-war experiences. For example, Petro Sydorenko built his narrative around stories connected with risky and dangerous situations which required breaking certain rules and were therefore life-threatening. Such stories included flight from one camp to another in Germany, illegal visits of public places, persecution from German policemen, flight from the Soviet repatriation executives, and sentence to death by the authorities from the Soviet repatriation team. In his interview, those stories were notable for their detailed elaboration. Another good example is an interview with Petro Struk who also positioned himself as a courageous man in difficult life circumstances in war-time Germany. Of course, I am not going to generalize all male narratives in such a way. However, it must be kept in mind that some narrators might have resorted to particular cultural prescriptions for self-presentations of their masculinity and built their narratives accordingly. At the same time, it is interesting that while active positioning of themselves was peculiar to some male respondents, in their pre-war stories they still presented themselves passively, as victims of the Soviet authorities.

In regard to distinctive discourses with women, in the interviews analysed here, the common feature of many of the narratives was the positioning of themselves as wives and mothers while describing their post-war experiences. They tended to concentrate on household stories, including problems with raising their children, and then turning to stories about their children's education, achievements, and family statuses.

Approaching the analysis of the informants' identity performances, I was especially interested if the narrators would present themselves as former forced labourers, a separate group with a distinct war experience. Since the main focus of my research was pointed towards Ostarbeiters, I initially assigned that identity to all of my informants. Therefore, this determined the way my research unfolded, starting from formulating my research purpose and the selection of the informants. However, as I found later, former Ostarbeiters did not define themselves in the same way that I did.

Sometimes, recalling their forced labour experiences, narrators added details to their narrative from the stories of others and referred to certain authorities in order to prove and legitimize their own stories. For example, Petro Struk recalled some details from his wife's forced labour experience, which, in contrast to his own, was severe. In a similar way, Halyna

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<sup>286</sup> Michael Schwalbe and Michelle Workomir, "Interviewing Men," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, eds. Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002), 204.

Kudla supplemented her story about forced labour with some details from her husband's war experience. Raisa Machula often referred to her mother and husband's memories about pre-war and war experience. Two other informants referred to some newspaper publications in order to confirm certain facts about forced labour.<sup>287</sup> However, referencing another source was an exception rather than a rule, which signified that informants did not try to collectivize their individual forced labour experience.

The choice of language is one more argument in support of the contention that informants did not attempt to identify themselves as a part of separate group of people united by a distinct war-time experience. They did not use such terms as "forced workers" or "Ostarbeiters" at all. If they used collective pronoun "we", they referred to people, who they were around, for example, workers at the same factory. The informants never tried to express the experience of all forced workers as members of a distinct group.

Neither did Ostarbeiters associate themselves with the "Displaced Persons" group. While recalling their sojourn in the DP camps, the vast majority of informants called them simply "camps", without referring to their special status. Sometimes informants designated them as "Polish" or "Ukrainian" camps. Some others referred to the DP camps as to camps for those people "who did not want to come back home."<sup>288</sup> For Evheniia Senkus-Stashunska DP camp simply meant "camp where only Ukrainians stayed after the war."<sup>289</sup> Or, as for Halyna Kudla, "international camp for those who were fleeing from the Bolsheviks."<sup>290</sup> In other words, former Ukrainian forced workers did not refer to themselves as "Ostarbeiters" and avoided the label of "DP" in their self-identification as well.

In the 1990s, the German government made compensatory payments to the former Nazi forced labourers. Former Ostarbeiters in Canada were eligible for the compensations as well. Many of them used that right and received money from the German government. Starting my research, I presumed that the fact of receiving compensations and public discussion around that issue must have stimulated the former Ostarbeiters in Canada to present their identities as of forced labours. For example, they might have tried to "justify"

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<sup>287</sup> Emiliia Svitalska, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 29, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>288</sup> For example, see: Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011. Stephania Riopka, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 3, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>289</sup> Evheniia Senkus-Stashynska, interviewed by Maria Melenchuk. Toronto, ON. September 12, 2011.

<sup>290</sup> Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). After the war, the letters "DPs" grew to become a pejorative term both in Europe and Canada. That also might be a reason behind the fact that Ostarbeiters avoided the label "DPs" in their self-representations.

their eligibility for compensation by stressing the hardship of forced labour. However, listening to their interviews, I realized that my previous assumption was false. The informants did not mention the process of receiving compensations by their own initiatives. They did not try to estimate the moral aspect of that process as my informant in Ukraine did. Ostarbeiters in Ukraine often told that those payments were adequate since nobody could compensate all misery and humiliation they suffered. Nothing similar was expressed by Ostarbeiters in Canada. They seemed just to ignore that topic and avoid any moral appraisal of that issue. In my opinion, it also suggests that forced labour experience did not play significant role in the informants' identities as presented during the interviews.

So, on the basis of my interviews, I conclude that Ostarbeiters did not try to generalize their individual experiences or integrate them into larger social history. On the individual level, as many interviews showed, Ostarbeiters' experiences did not play a significant function in the organization of the narrators' self-definitions. I was also surprised to discover that my informants did not put forth ethnic or professional identities. Shifting from one scene to another, informants positioned themselves differently: as victims of "the Soviets" before the war, as passive or active forced labourers, as those who assumed control over the events during the post-war period, or as mothers and wives after the war.

However, one common feature echoed across many interviews. It was mentioned above that many informants referred to the Soviet-related topics more often than to other themes. The recurrence of such topics with their constant accounts of difficulties, suffering, or distress caused by the Soviet authorities indicates, to my mind, the narrators' attempts to position themselves as victims of the Soviet regime. This sole identity, and no other, was continually revealed through many narratives.

#### ***4.3.3. Ostarbeiters' story-sharing as social activity***

The way Ostarbeiters' narratives were organized and presented can be explained, to a great extent, by the social nature of story-sharing. As Brandon Wallace's sociological research of the construction of life stories by elders proves that people do not naturally "break out" into storytelling. Rather, life stories are social constructions: they are formed in response to specific narrative challenges which may arise throughout life. For example, when children or grandchildren ask an older person to tell about his/her past. Or, when people meet at

formally organized events and discuss some past events.<sup>291</sup> Often, the rehearsal offered by a prior narrative challenge helps to convey a life story at a future occasion. In other words, the best narrators usually have practiced their life stories. And vice-versa: when the respondent has difficulty in constructing his/her life story, it can be explained by the assumption that talking about the past has not been requested and practiced before.<sup>292</sup> Similarly, a noted Italian scholar of oral history Luisa Passerini argues that narratives are not the pure product of the interview situation alone. “When someone is asked for his life-story, his memory draws on pre-existing story-lines and ways of telling stories, even if these are in part modified by the circumstances.”<sup>293</sup>

In my opinion, these considerations help to explain some tendencies in Ostarbeiters’ narrations. According to my observations, the most elaborate and coherent stories were presented by those informants who had previously practiced sharing stories within their families. For example, when interviews were conducted in the spouse’s presence, husband and wife reminded each other of different details regarding the stories. That signified that they previously had recalled that stories between them and had established a common set of memories. For example, speaking about her trip to Germany, Yelena Shaleva forgot the name of one town and asked her husband:

“So, we were going through... Sorry, I forgot the name. Do you remember, Yurii? [her husband]. – *No, I do not.* – But I have told you many times. – *You went through Peremysl.* – Oh, yes, we were going through Poland.”<sup>294</sup>

In another case, Petro Sydorenko’s wife was present at his interview. Listening to her husband, she noticed some inaccuracies in his story about the end of the war and intervened in the interview:

“I am sorry, I am going to add something here because Petro might not remember. It is difficult for him to recall so promptly. So, he escaped from Hrost to Essen in June...”<sup>295</sup>

She continued with lots of details in regard to dates and place names, and her husband did not object to her version of the events. Also, I had an interview with Lesia Kostiuk, the widow of an Ostarbeiter. She presented a detailed story about her husband’s war experiences and convinced me that her husband had liked to talk about that with her.

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<sup>291</sup> Brandon Wallace, “Reconsidering the Life Review: The Social Construction of Talk About the Past,” *The Gerontologists*, 32 (1) (1992): 120-121. ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source, <http://search.proquest.com.cyber.usask.ca>

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>293</sup> Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, 8.

<sup>294</sup> Yelena Shaleva, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 14, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>295</sup> Petro Sydorenko, interviewed by Iroida Wynnyckyj. Toronto, ON. February 4, 1997 (UCRDC Archive).

The most detailed accounts of the past were also presented by a few Ostarbeiters who indicated that they were active in political organizations formed by former DPs in Canada.<sup>296</sup> I conclude that they must have participated in the collective sharing of the memoirs about the past which helped them to build their own stories during the interviews.

But, in most cases, comments from many Ostarbeiters suggest that they were seldom requested to recall their life experiences in broad, encompassing accounts. Perhaps, it can be explained by the lack of interest by friends and family in the Ostarbeiters' recollections, especially those concerning the war.

During the interviews, many respondents could not recall many details regarding their war experiences, such as the duration of their trip to Germany, names of cities and camps, the amount of their salary, duration of work hours, and the names of their masters. Of course, it can be explained by the selectiveness of individual memory and the considerable distance of those events. But, at the same time, it might also mean that Ostarbeiters had not practiced storytelling about these events and, consequently, their memory was lacking in many related details.

General observation of the interviews suggests that many former Ostarbeiters discussed some aspects of their life experiences with their children and grandchildren. But for most of the informants, giving such a full scale autobiographical interview to a researcher was done for the first time. Thus, the lack of previous narrative challenges and, as a result, lack of pre-existing story-lines may explain the difficulties in storytelling that many informants faced during their interviews.<sup>297</sup> However, it does not clarify why, in my interviews, other segments of Ostarbeiters' life stories, such as the subjects related to their interaction with the Soviet authorities, were much more elaborate in comparison to the Ostarbeiters' war-time experiences.

On the one hand, it may be presumed that harsh treatment under the Soviet regime indeed determined the strong influence of that particular experience in the Ostarbeiters' memories. On the other hand, a possible explanation may be found in a broader social context of the former labourers' memories. My previous experience in studying Ostarbeiters' individual memories encourages me to think so. Interviews with former Ostarbeiters in

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<sup>296</sup> Olha Maksymiuk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. November 4, 2001 (UCRDC Archive). Helen Yunk, interviewed by Maria Melnychuk. Toronto, ON. September 21, 2011. Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>297</sup> It is also worth mentioning that I met my informants only once. They did not have much time to review their live stories before the interviews.



Ukraine, which I conducted by myself or found in published collections of interviews, suggest a striking difference: while many Ostarbeiters in Ukraine tended to present their war experience as the most significant and traumatic experience in their lives, Ostarbeiters in Canada, having similar war experience, did not share the same type of reflection in that regard.

It is recognized that the memory of individuals is fundamentally influenced by the social context in which they function.<sup>298</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist known for developing the concept of collective memory, stressed that social processes are essential to individual memories. Memory is social because people employ social rituals, ceremonies, and various public events to remember something. In addition, sharing memories and remembering together also makes memory social and determines the vividness of personal memories.<sup>299</sup>

From such a perspective, Ostarbeiters' memories belong to special social context, created by the Ukrainian community in Canada. I am inclined to think that since Ostarbeiters were part of the DPs group, the narrative environment elaborated by the DPs might have the strongest influence on them. As it was shown in the previous chapter, political refugees were very successful in creating collective memory about their group and about DPs in general. Thus, the views of political refugees, which can be defined as anti-Soviet, have been disseminated in the Ukrainian-Canadian public discourse. Presumably, former labourers had been exposed to recurrent stories and images about Soviet history presented and disseminated by political refugees through the media, newspapers, and different organizations. This could reinforce the Ostarbeiters' own recollections about their encounters with the Soviet authorities and help to keep those memories vivid.

At the same time, I hypothesize that there are two more possible explanations of the tendency of Ostarbeiters to position themselves as victims of the "Soviets." Former Ostarbeiters in Canada have been exposed not only to the anti-Soviet propaganda fostered by the Ukrainian political refugees, but also, up to the 1990s, they were also under the strong influence of an anti-Soviet discourse of the Cold War in Canada and the United States. That might have encouraged the tendency of the narrators to position themselves as victims of the

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<sup>298</sup> James Wertsch, "Collective Memory," in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, eds. Pascal Boyer and James Wertsch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 118-119.

<sup>299</sup> Dario Paez, Nekane Basabe, and Jose Luis Gonzalez, "Social Processes and Collective Memory: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Remembering Political Events," in *Collective memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspective*, eds. James Penneaker, Dario Paez, and Bernard Rime (New Jersey: Manham, 1997), 155.

Soviet regime. Reproaching Soviet authorities and assuming anti-Soviets identities could be also a way for Ostarbeiters to deflect any possible suspicion about them as former Soviet citizens.

If an anti-Soviet public discourse influenced Ostarbeiters' self-representations, certain collective stances in Ostarbeiters' memories can be distinguished. Listening to a particular story in the context of other narratives, we can recognize its resemblance to related accounts. Evidence of a shared construction of the past can be traced through the repetition of storytelling motives across interviews and a finite set of preferred expressive forms for the recollection of particular experience.<sup>300</sup> Such recurrent motives through Ostarbeiters' narratives were mentioned above: "the Soviets" were generalized as "Russians" or "Bolsheviks" and described as necessarily "evil"; the informants presented themselves as victims of Soviet policy.

Moreover, according to Alessandro Portelli, "the greater or lesser presence of formalized materials (proverbs, songs, formulas, and stereotypes) may measure the degree in which a collective viewpoint exists within an individual's narrative."<sup>301</sup> A comparative examination of Ostarbeiters' narratives shows that informants did use some recurrent symbols. First is the motif of "exile to Siberia", which resonated among many informants in regard to the stories about the Soviet repatriation campaign. Another such a recurrent symbolic motif in these parts of the narratives was "fleeing" from "the Soviets", "chase", "catching". For example, "Russians caught Ukrainians and sent to Siberia,"<sup>302</sup> "we fled several times... they [executives from the Soviet repatriation teams] captured people at night,"<sup>303</sup> "I told her that I was fleeing from Russians."<sup>304</sup> The recurrence of these motifs across interviews, as preferred expressive forms for the recollection of this experience, suggests that they are not simply individual performative expressions but reflect images presented in a broader, collective narrative environment.<sup>305</sup>

Therefore, on the one hand, I assume that many informants presented their encounters with the Soviet authorities as those of specific biographical relevance, which can be

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<sup>300</sup> Richard Candida Smith, "Analytic Strategies for Oral History Interviews", in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, eds. Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2002), 718-719.

<sup>301</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990), 49.

<sup>302</sup> Nicolas (Mykola) Maryn, interviewed by Maria Melnychuk. Toronto, ON. September 14, 2011.

<sup>303</sup> Anelia Varvaruk, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 31, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>304</sup> Halyna Kudla, interviewed by Tetiana Lapan. Toronto, ON. October 11, 2001 (UCRDC Archive).

<sup>305</sup> Smith, *Analytic Strategies for Oral History Interviews*, 722.

explained by the influence of specific public discourse in the Ukrainian Canadian community and Canadian society. On the other hand, I do not eliminate the possibility that it was not the pressure of public discourse but the actual painfulness of the experiences of dealing with the “Soviets” that really determined the high biographical relevancy of those experiences in individual memories.

Trying to merge these two hypotheses, I find that the most appropriate explanation lies in between. The Soviets’ violent pre-war and post-war policies towards Ostarbeiters defined the significance of these experiences in individual memories. At the same time, the recurrence of the similar “Soviet” subjects in public discourse helped informants to preserve and maintain these memories. For this reason, those parts of the many Ostarbeiters narratives were coherently elaborate, emotionally charged, and recalled so easily.

The manner in which stories about informants’ forced labour experiences were organized and presented can be explained in a similar way. I do not deny that war experiences might be of special importance for the informants, but analysis of many interviews proved that, because of the absence of the corresponding public discourse and the limited interest of friends and family, Ostarbeiters’ war experience did not undergo similar reflections as did their “Soviet” stories. Therefore the tendency in many interviews was poor elaboration of war-related stories, scarcity of emotions, and lack of interpretation or generalization.

This study and analysis of former Ostarbeiters’ memories reflects the narrators’ historical perspectives as well as my perspective as a scholar. I recognize that my interpretations of the testimonies and attempts to make connections between them and the larger social context could be challenged by my informants. In addition, it is possible that the readers may come to conclusions different from mine. Therefore, I do not claim that my analysis of Ostarbeiters’ narratives is exhaustive and exclusive. Rather, it opens up an opportunity for an exchange of possible future interpretations.

## CONCLUSION

There are several fields of scholarly interests to which my study contributes.

First of all, this study is novel for Ukrainian-Canadian history. Since the history of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada as a separate group has been previously overlooked in Ukrainian-Canadian scholarship, my thesis partially fills this historiographical gap. It also suggests challenging the existing generalized conclusion about Ukrainian DPs as being “political refugees” only. Considering Ostarbeiters to be different from the other DPs in their political interests and self-identifications, I propose to distinguish them as non-activist refugees in contrast to political refugees. Some scholars have also tended to present the post-war encounters of Ukrainian DPs with Ukrainian Canadians as frustrating experience since DPs did not desire to integrate into the new society and continued their political struggle for Ukrainian independence. While I am not going to dispute this thesis, I argue that it did not hold true for all DPs. As my research showed, Ukrainian Ostarbeiters were willing to integrate into the Canadian society and barely participated in any political activities. My research also indicates important variations in reasons for resettlement and education levels between Ostarbeiters and political refugees. In such a way, my study complicates the historical narrative about Ukrainians in Canada by presenting them as a heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous group. It sheds new light on the history of the “third wave” of Ukrainian immigration to Canada and the history of Ukrainian community in Canada.

Secondly, this research contributes to broader Canadian ethnic studies. By reading my thesis in the context of the history of immigration to Canada, one can distinguish uniqueness and similarities in life experiences of different immigrant groups. Placing Ostarbeiters’ immigrant narratives within those of other immigrant groups will help researchers to comprehend experiences of various ethnic groups in their adjustment to life in Canada. In the context of Canadian ethnic studies, the analysis of Ostarbeiters’ narratives and identities raises questions about the way other collective memories have been constructed in Canadian societies: the Quebecois, Indigenous people, Westerners, Asian immigrants and many others. Moreover, analysis of immigrant narratives, including Ostarbeiters’ life stories, will show how immigrants construct their identities through hegemonic Canadian discourse on immigration and multiculturalism. Also, making those narratives available to the public will provide Canadians with a better understanding of the immigrant experiences and the contributions that immigrants make to Canada.

Finally, this study also contributes to the history of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters. Specifically, it provides a new, namely Ukrainian-Canadian, context for the history of former forced labourers: it reconstructs the post-war experiences and analyses the individual memories of those Ostarbeiters who did not return home after the war but decided to resettle to another country instead. With this in mind, I regard my present thesis as an important step toward a comprehensive study of the heritage of former Ukrainian Ostarbeiters. In future, by comparing post-war experiences of those Ostarbeiters who came back to the Soviet-dominated Ukraine with those who resettled to Canada, it will be possible to demonstrate how people with similar biographical background and war experiences organized their post-war life in different political contexts. Moreover, a future research may also explain how collective and individual memories about forced labour were constructed and how they functioned in various historical environments: the Soviet Union, independent Ukraine, and Canada.

Furthermore, this study opens a good outlook for another field of prospective scholarly investigation. With each passing year, it is getting harder and harder to find the informants and collect Ostarbeiters' first-hand testimonies, simply because these people are in their later years and many of them have died. But memories about forced labour may be studied in the ways other than interviewing Ostarbeiters as direct eye-witnesses. My present study with its recorded interviews and attempts of their interpretation may become an important starting point for an interesting and innovative study of Ostarbeiters' life experiences in the light of their children's recollections. In other words, Ostarbeiters' life experiences may be studied through the individual memories of their children. Such a study would show how memory about particular historical events was transferred from the participants of those events to the people who have never experienced them directly. It would be especially interesting to interview children of those Ostarbeiters whose interviews are already recorded. Such a comparative analysis of narratives about the same life experience provided by Ostarbeiters on the one hand and their next generation on the other can shed light on the processes of memory simplification, condensation, and retrieval. It may also lead to important findings in the study of collective memory about particular events of the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely those concerning Soviet history and the history of the Second World War. An analysis of individual memories of former Ostarbeiters' children may demonstrate who had a greater influence on shaping their individual remembering: parents as participants and interpreters of certain historical events, or the broader social context in which those

children lived. Such an analysis may lead to some important theoretical generalizations in understanding the dynamics of individual and collective remembering.

Besides all indicated present and possible future contributions of the study of Ostarbeiters' history to the academic field, one equally important merit of this study has not been mentioned yet. Conducting my oral history field work, I was granted an opportunity not to ensconce myself in libraries and research centres, but to dip into the actual life of the Ukrainian Canadian community. Communication with people and personal observations became an integral part of my research. It helped me to better understand the historical dynamics in the Ukrainian Canadian community and to verify my assumptions concerning collective and individual remembering with respect to this group.

As it has been mentioned, my present research revealed that no collective memory about Ostarbeiters has been created in Canada. However, the mere appearance of my study contributes to the creation of that collective narrative. Firstly, I communicated with Ukrainian Canadians on the topics relevant to Ostarbeiters' history. Sharing my research interest with the members of Ukrainian community, I realized that most Ukrainian Canadians I have encountered were familiar neither with the term "Ostarbeiter" nor with Ostarbeiters' history. For many of those helping me to locate potential respondents, it came as a big surprise to discover that their friends were Ostarbeiters and they had never actually heard about it before. In such a way, my research provoked remembering about the Ukrainian DPs and learning about Ostarbeiters. Moreover, I will send my thesis to my all informants and their descendants, which may help Ostarbeiters' families to preserve memory about forced labour experiences. Secondly, my thesis brings a new topic into the Ukrainian-Canadian historiography and, at the same time, into larger Canadian scholarship. Hopefully, further research on the subject of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada will be undertaken. In such a way, talking and writing about Ostarbeiters' experience may help to create collective narrative about former forced workers. What is also important, it will diversify the collective narrative about Ukrainian immigrants in Canada by introducing Ostarbeiters as their rightful members.

But the most rewarding experience for me has been the direct communication with my informants. Their willingness to talk and share personal life stories with a stranger, who has just set up a voice recorder in front of them was both touching and much appreciated. Very often former Ostarbeiters were so willing to talk that it was even difficult to end the interview. Their trust in me as a researcher and their openness during the interviews were the

strongest motivations to pursue my research. Sharing their first-hand views of the past, my informants provided me with an opportunity to gain a greater sense of history. In addition, I felt as a valued listener for the people who have had few opportunities to talk to someone interested in their stories. I hope that talking about the past had positive effect on for the informants' self-esteem through satisfying their need in sharing their experience with younger generations. Historical research, after all, is not only academic writing, it also comprises social interactions, emotions, and enrichment of personal experience through communication with others. Therefore, I am convinced that engaging into conversations about the past has been a rewarding experience both for me and my interviewees.

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## Appendix 1

Distinguishing emblems for Polish and Soviet citizens who were forcedly employed for the Nazi economy during the Second World War



Badge for Ostarbeiters,  
workers from the Soviet-occupied territories

Source: "Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene und "Ostarbeiter." *Zwangsarbeit im NS-Staat*.  
<http://www.bundesarchiv.de/zwangsarbeit/index.html>



Badge for the forced workers from Poland

Source: "Poland - the Beginning of the Military Expansion." *Zwangsarbeit im NS-Staat*.  
<http://www.bundesarchiv.de/zwangsarbeit/geschichte/auslaendisch/polen/index.html.en>



## Appendix 2

Examples of Soviet propaganda broadsheets distributed by the repatriation teams among the Soviet Displaced Persons



*In Russian:* Liberated Soviet people! You have been delivered from the Nazi slavery! (1944)



*In Russian:* We are waiting for you at home from the German slavery



*In Russian:* I will avenge for torment and wounds

Source: Polyansky, Pavel. *Zhertvy Dvukh Diktatur: Zhizn, Trud, Unizheniia I Smert Sovetskikh Voennoplennyykh I Ostarbaiterov Na Chuzhbine*. Moskva: Rossiiskaia Politicheskaya Entsiklopediya, 2002.

## Appendix 3

Consent Form designed for conducting interviews in the field by the author

### **Interview Agreement**

**for participation in research project**

**“Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada: Personal Life Experience and Public Memory”**

Researcher:  
Maria Melenchuk  
Graduate Student  
Department of History  
University of Saskatchewan  
Contact phone number: (306) 979-7332

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the interviewee):

Thank you for your agreement to participate in my research project. My research explores the post World War Two life experiences of former Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Canada. From 2004, I have been investigating the history of former forced workers who, after the war, came back from Germany to the Soviet Union. My long term research goal is to compare the post-war experiences of former Ostarbeiters who arrived to Canada to the experiences of those who returned to the former USSR. The life experiences of Ukrainian Canadian former forced labourers is a little known topic and by agreeing to participate in this study, you will contribute significantly to the public and scholarly knowledge of the complex history of Ukrainian Ostarbeiters and their lives after the war.

Your participation in my research is completely voluntary. My project anticipates conducting an interview with you at any convenient time and place for you. You can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. Usually, an interview takes from one to two hours but it is your right to decide how much time you want to devote for it. Oftentimes, people find it rewarding to share their life experiences with researchers and in such cases interviews can last longer.

The procedure of interview anticipates recollection of your life experiences, and as such it introduces a certain risk of provoking sore reminiscences. To avoid it, you may withdraw from an interview at any time without any explanations. If any of my questions during the interview may come across as unpleasant, intimate, or undesirable for any reasons, you may refuse to answer them.

I assert that if you want to have your personal information kept confidential, all references that may lead to such information from your interview will not be shared with others, in writing or publication. Although the data from this research project is intended to be used for my Master's Thesis, conference presentation and/or writing journal article, the data will be reported in aggregate or summarized form and it will be impossible to identify individuals. If you choose to remain anonymous, you will be given a pseudonym in case of using direct quotations from your interview, and all identifying information (you name, name of you relatives, name of institutions, your positions and other related information) will be removed from my reports.

After conducting the interview, its transcription, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. You will receive the copies of the audio recording of your interview and its transcript for your personal use.

A audio recording of your interview, its transcript, and any other supporting documents you are willing to share with me will be stored in my private research archives. In addition, upon completion of my MA thesis,

the copies of these materials will be archived in the Oral History Collection of the Prairie Centre for the Study of Ukrainian Heritage (St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan, Director Natalia Khanenko-Friesen). Oral History Program at PCUH will be professionally looking after all matters related to safe and ethical depository and maintenance of the research data generated as a result of my M.A. research. PCUH Oral History Program has its own strict protocol of data maintenance and data sharing and all the requests concerning safety and privacy of interviews as stated by you will be strictly observed by PCUH Oral History Program staff. If you choose to maintain confidentiality, all identifying information will be removed from the collected data in archives.

You will be informed by me in case of any new changes in archiving, using you interview, or any other variations that could have a bearing on your decision to participate in this project. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason and at any time. If you withdraw from the research project, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request.

If you are interested in finding out the results of this research, I will be happy to provide you with my report or a final paper. If you have any questions concerning this research project, please feel free to contact me at any point. See my contact information below. My research was reviewed and approved by the University of Saskatchewan's Behavioural Research Ethics Board on March 31, 2011. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office ((306) 966-2084).

In case you might find the participation in this project emotionally unsettling and would like to seek further advice on how to deal with this emotional response, please contact **Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service ((306) 933-6200) and you will be provided with immediate help.**

**I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

Participants's contact information  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If you DO NOT wish your real name used in any written reports  
in connection to this project, please check this box:**

☐

Any additional recommendations or comments:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Research Supervisor:**

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## Appendix 4

Questionnaire employed for oral history fieldwork by the author

### I phase of the interview - open general question

- I am very interested in your life experience. Although my project is focused on your war and postwar experience, I am eager to know about your whole life. Your life experience is very important for us, young generation who lives in completely different life circumstances. So, if you do not mind, begin with you childhood.

### II phase of the interview – specified questions

#### Childhood and Prewar Years

- Where were you born?
- Tell me about your family. Who were your parents? Who did they earn a living?
- How many children did they have?
- Where did you live? Describe your house, your village (town, city).
- Would you say that you were comfortably off?
- When did you come to school? Did you like your study? Which lessons did you like the least (the most)?
- Did you help your parents in housekeeping (and/or farming)?
- How did you spend your free time?
- Which holidays did your family celebrate? How? Which ones were your favorites?
- Did you celebrate church holidays? Did your parents go to church?
- Who made the greatest contribution into your upbringing?
- Who was the most important authority for you in your childhood?

#### Beginning of the War

- What news, if any, did you hear before the war?
- Was the beginning of the war unexpected to you?
- How did you receive information about the situation at the front?
- Did you believe that war would be long? Did you think that the Soviet Union or Germany would win the war? What did you hear from news about it?
- Was anybody from your family taken to the front?
- Was the evacuation organized? By whom? Were the people willing to be evacuated?
- Do you remember when the Nazi (the Soviet Army) came into your village (town)?
- How did they look like?

- What was your first impression about them?
- How did they treat people?
- Was your family forced to give something for the soldiers (food, transport, house)?
- What life plans did you have before the war? Did you dream about some occupation, your own family?

#### Mobilization of the Ostarbeiters to Germany

- How did the Nazi start their mobilization of workers to Germany?
- How did they encourage people to go to Germany? How did they describe it?
- Were people willing to go? Why?
- Was the mobilization voluntary? If yes, when did it become forced?
- Who were taken at first: women or man? At what age?
- Who could be exempted from the mobilization to Germany?
- Did somebody try to protect population from the forced mobilization?
- When did you decide to go Germany? Why? / When were you caught?
- What were you allowed to take with you to Germany?
- Did you have any chances to escape? Did other people try to do that?
- Describe your route to Germany.
- Which transport did the Nazi use for transportation the workers?
- Did they feed you? How did they treat you during the journey?
- How many people were with you? Were they your friends, acquaintances?
- How long did your journey last?
- When did you arrive to Germany?
- What was your first impression about the country?
- How did the Nazi allocate workers to different jobs?
- Where did you work? Describe your first impression and your job.
- How did the Nazi treat you?
- Did you know German? How did you communicate with Germans?
- How were you fed? Were you hungry?
- Did you have any holidays?
- Did you receive wage? If yes, what could you buy for that money?
- Where did you live? Were that conditions good for you?
- How many people lived with you? What nationalities?
- Did you were a special sign as a foreign worker? If yes, did you try to hide it? What did it mean for you?

- Were you allowed to walk in the city (village)? Alone or under control?
- Did you receive any news from the front? From whom?
- Did anybody encourage you to return home?

#### End of the War, DP-camps

- How did you meet the news about the end of the war? Do you remember that moment?
- What did you expect? How did you imagine you returning home?
- Did you want to return home? Why? Why not?
- What were the pros and cons of your returning home?
- Did anybody influence your decision?
- Was it stable? Or something/someone incited you to hesitate?
- When did you see the first soldier of the Soviet Army? How did they behave themselves?
- Did they propagandize returning to the Soviet Union? How? What did they tell you?
- Which methods of persuasion did they use? Did they force people to return?
- What did your friends/acquaintances think about returning?
- Were did you live after the end of the war? In what conditions?
- Who fed you? Were you provided with medical care?
- What did you do? Did you work?
- Did you meet other Ukrainians? Did you try to organize your national life?
- What about children? How many children there were?
- How the Alliance treated you? Did they try to persuade you not to come back to the Soviet Union?
- What news from the Soviet Union did you hear? Did you know how former workers were met and treated at home?
- How long did you stay at the camp?
- When did you definitely decide not to come back to the Soviet Union and choose Canada for immigration?
- Why did you choose Canada? Why not other country?
- Had you heard something about Canada before the war? During you staying in Germany? Do you have any ancestors who came to Canada before the war?
- Was it hard for you to leave your family, your previous life in Ukraine and depart to Canada?
- How did you imagine your life in Canada? Did you know how would you be treated in Canada?



### Life in Canada

- Describe your trip and arriving to Canada.
- Did you travel alone?
- How did you choose your place of destination? Did somebody recommend it for you? Was it a random choice?
- Describe your first impressions from Canada, from local people.
- Were you disappointed? Did you regret about your choice at the beginning?
- How did you start organizing your life?
- How did you earn your living at the beginning? Where did you live?
- Did you join Ukrainian community? Church? Social/political organizations?
- Did you know English? Was it difficult for you to master a foreign language?
- What was the most difficult for you?
- Did you accustom quickly to your new life? Which factors helped you? Which disturbed you?
- How quickly did your life change?
- Did you receive education? How did you get your profession? Did you like it?
- Did you hear something about those forced workers who came back to the Soviet Union?
- When did you get married?

### **III phase of the interview - conclusive general questions**

- Have you ever regretted about your choice not to come back to Ukraine after the end of the war? And have you ever regretted about choosing Canada to live in?
- If you had come back to the Soviet Ukraine after the war, how do you think you would have been treated? Do you think you would have been blamed for working in Germany? How would you have organized your life?
- If you could turn time to the end of the war, would you make the same choice about immigration to Canada today?
- Looking back on your life, which period was the most difficult in your life? What was the most important choice in your life?